

Supply

In a larger sense, this Government has taken unprecedented efforts to remove all foreign fishing presence from our non-surplus stocks within the Canadian economic zone and to bring into force deterrents and penalties that will ensure that those resources are respected and made available to Canadian fishermen. I think that by now all Members of the House know what a great benefit that has been to the fishermen.

This Government has taken those steps. This Government has been firm. This Government has been reasonable, but it has advanced methodically over the past 12 or 14 months, in the case of its relationship with France, the position that our fishermen and their needs come first. This was not done by some other Government. No previous Liberal Government had the courage to do so. This was done by the Government led by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), the Government of which I am proud to be a member.

France has claimed an enormous part of the Canadian 200-mile zone for its two tiny islands off the South Coast of Newfoundland. This is an unreasonable claim, and in fact, we believe that when it is eventually submitted to a court of international arbitration, the decision will be awarded in Canada's favour.

A small, tiny speck of rock adjacent to our Atlantic provinces cannot possibly claim an equitable division of resources with the large continental mass of that rock known as Newfoundland. France knows very well that it will not succeed before any international court in giving effect to the claim of a huge part of the outer Gulf of the St. Lawrence which is Canadian territory. The channel dispute is witness to that. It was awarded in France's favour that islands which are sovereign islands of Great Britain but within the French territorial sea could not claim a large fishing zone around those islands for Great Britain.

It is regrettable that France has made this enormous and unreasonable claim and has at the same time, to put pressure on Canada, escalated its fishery in the disputed zone to four times France's traditional allocation of some 6,400 tonnes of fish in that area. In so doing, France has endangered the stocks and the livelihoods of Canadian communities and the residents and fishermen of those communities, particularly in the vicinity of the southern and eastern coasts of Newfoundland.

France has resisted and continues to resist submitting the boundaries dispute to an international court, demanding from Canada even more fish as the price of an agreement to get the boundary matter into adjudication. As Hon. Members know, these demands are outrageous and cannot be substantiated. Canada will not yield to them. Canada continues to insist, however, that the boundary issue must be submitted to international adjudication before it is too late and the well-being and livelihoods of our fishermen in that area are permanently destroyed.

We want to negotiate with France on a reasonable basis quotas which are fair in the interim period, while the matter is being subjected to arbitration, but we will not give up quotas

which will disadvantage our fishermen merely in order to allow ourselves to give in to this kind of pressure—I could use a stronger word to describe it—because we must stand for the interests of our fishermen first.

There are 70 small communities on the south coast of Newfoundland. The unemployment rate there is 22 per cent. Of the 26 fish plants in that area, 15 are closed for at least three months of every year. We are talking here about the livelihoods of almost 5,000 commercial fishermen and 3,400 plant workers on the south coast of Newfoundland alone.

On average, each Newfoundland fisherman catches about 18 tonnes of various kinds of fish in that area, worth about \$8,000 to each fisherman per year. In contrast, the 176 fishermen of St. Pierre and Miquelon catch something in the order of 100 tonnes per year, more than five times what our fishermen catch, worth some \$55,000 for each one of the 176 fishermen of St. Pierre and Miquelon. The truth is that it is our fishermen who are being disadvantaged and who will be absolutely devastated if we do not eliminate the French overfishing and solve this boundary question as quickly and as swiftly as possible.

That is why we have acted on behalf of these fishermen. We have responded to their concerns by putting pressure on the French, step by step. When we went into discussions early last year, we found that France, by the end of February, had already exceeded the quota we granted it within those waters outside the disputed zone, and we closed, therefore, Canadian ports to French fishing vessels. They had exceeded their 6,400-tonne quota and we therefore closed the ports. We next refused to allow France to fish on Burgeo Bank, an important fishing ground outside the disputed zone to the west of the Burin Peninsula. During the summer of 1987 we closed the rest of area 3PS outside the disputed zone to French fishing, including the western gullies which are very important and precious fishing grounds which they have fished for many years.

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The result of these closures has been a significant reduction in French fishing in Canadian waters and, indeed, in the disputed zone. Traditionally, some nine large factory freezer trawlers came from France to harvest our fish. This year I am told that that number has been cut in half because of the strong measures we have taken. You know that when a wayward trawler, a political escapade, if you like, sailed into our waters two or three weeks ago, some 50 miles off St. John's, Newfoundland, and openly defied our decision that no quotas would be granted to large trawlers this year, we arrested them, brought them to port, and charged all of the members of that crew, with the exception of members of the media who were aboard.

On October 9, France walked away from the negotiating table. Although we had put a reasonable proposition on the table for interim quotas, France rejected it, and therefore we said that no further quotas would be granted to French