

• (2240)

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, the name of this Party is the New Democratic Party, not the NDP Party. I would suggest that Members of the House at least show that much respect.

Mr. Fennell: He is not in his seat.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member who just rose on a point of order knows that Hon. Members are not recognized unless they are in their seat.

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I apologize if I have offended my colleagues from the New Democratic Party. I remind them that this is the Progressive Conservative Party but I do not object when they refer to me as a Tory.

Mr. Benjamin: The same difference.

Mr. Johnson: I did not heckle anyone when they were speaking this evening, because this is a very sensitive issue in Newfoundland. I believe it is far more sensitive than some Members realize.

The reason that this issue is emotional and that there is such an outcry from people in Newfoundland today is that they are afraid. They are afraid that the Government will do what past Governments have done and give away some of the fish stocks that are so vitally important to the people of Newfoundland.

Mr. Benjamin: Which is what you have done.

Mr. Johnson: That is not what we have done. We have agreed to negotiate. If the Government cannot reach a settlement that is favourable to the people of Newfoundland and Canada, then there will be no agreement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: I certainly will not agree to anything that I believe is not in the best interests of the province that I represent, and represent proudly, I might say. I want to assure Hon. Members here tonight that I am not a slave to my Party. I only have obligations to the people who placed their confidence in me when they elected me to come here and represent them. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, and all Members of the Chamber that I will not be satisfied if the agreement that is negotiated is not good for Newfoundland.

We must ask ourselves why Canada has the objective of referring the boundary dispute off the south coast of Newfoundland to an international judicial tribunal for settlement. The answer is easy. Intensive negotiations have been going on since the extension of jurisdiction by Canada and France in 1977. We all realize that St. Pierre and Miquelon are part of France just as Newfoundland is part of Canada. I will not suggest that the French do not have any rights. The fact is that the Government of France is not even concerned about the people of St. Pierre and Miquelon because it is sending its metropolitan fleet to raid the fishing grounds on which its own citizens who live on St. Pierre and Miquelon are vitally

dependent. If this Government's initiative can settle the agreement with France to the benefit of Newfoundland, it will also benefit the people of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

Today I heard talk about gunboats, armed patrol boats and so on. During his speech, the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) asked if we are supposed to declare war. We would not declare war because we are too sensible. What are the alternatives? What would members of the New Democratic Party do if they were negotiating on behalf of a union? Would they attempt to arrive at a settlement without talking? When there is a dispute between a company and a labour organization they must sit down and exchange views over the table to hopefully strike an agreement. I believe that is what the Government is attempting to achieve here.

Certainly I have concerns and worries that if this goes to arbitration we may not be as successful as we hope. However, what other recourse is there if we cannot reach an agreement through negotiation?

We are aware of the delays involved before a judgment is rendered when ordinary Canadians go to court. It would not be sensible to expect a settlement before four years if we considered taking this dispute before a world court. That is why the Government has entered into these negotiations.

Earlier, the Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate (Mr. Baker) said that we have negotiated away 2J+3KL. That has not been negotiated away, according to what I have seen. We have only agreed to discuss the matter.

The industry and the Government of Newfoundland are aware what happened when the French delegation was in Newfoundland some time ago. I would be the first to express my dissatisfaction with the fact that toward the end of last week communications somehow broke down and the Newfoundland Government and the industry were not completely informed about the progress made by the delegation that went to France to begin negotiations at least. However, that fact cannot change. If I happen to say something in anger about a friend, no matter how many times I apologize the words are said and we do not have the ability to take them back.

The fact is that communication broke down during two or three days, which has resulted in an outcry from Newfoundland. I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I would be disappointed in Newfoundlanders and in the Premier of the province if they were not outraged. I am outraged as well, and expressed as much to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Siddon) and the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski). But that is the benefit in belonging to the Progressive Conservative Party. We are not enslaved. We can speak out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnson: I can go to Newfoundland and say that I disagree with what my Party is doing in government. That is freedom and democracy. No one from my Party has ever told me since I came here not to speak up on an issue.