

Oral Questions

to persuade him to speak directly to his friend, the Conservative Prime Minister of France, and ask him to stop these actions which have a very negative impact on Canada?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we have done two things today. First of all, on my instructions, our negotiator has suspended talks with the French negotiator about a mediation process.

Second, we have transmitted a letter of protest to the French Ambassador in Canada, indicating the Canadian Government's profound concern about yesterday evening's events.

We do not want to see small businessmen from St. Pierre and Miquelon or Newfoundland victimized for the sake of an election campaign or for any other reason.

[English]

NEGOTIATIONS ON PURCHASING AIRPLANES AND SUBMARINES

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. By way of preamble, the Secretary of State for External Affairs has not explained why, in talking about the treaty of 1972, he sent a note to the French Government saying that the Conservative Government has given to the French fishing quotas far in excess of any obligations under the 1972 treaty.

Why has the Minister twice refused to answer a direct question to the effect that the Government should cancel or suspend all discussions with the French on the purchase of French nuclear submarines, and on the purchase of the Airbus for Air Canada, until the fisheries dispute is settled in a manner satisfactory to Canada?

Why is he evading answering that question? Is it because he is putting the interests of French companies and French workers ahead of the interests of the people of Newfoundland?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think there can be no question about the determination of the Government to give the highest priority to the interests of the fishermen and the economy of Newfoundland. We have done that consistently, and we have done it particularly in this case.

We have a discussion here today because of a very bizarre and strange incident last night. It is an incident that we have protested. When we called in the Ambassador of France to Canada this morning he indicated that the policy of France has not changed. In our judgment that means that there should not be any change in the traditional practices that have benefited the smaller fishermen of both Newfoundland and St. Pierre and Miquelon. We intend to deal with this incident directly on its merits, as we have.

I understand what the Hon. Member is trying to do. He is trying to create a larger partisan question and to start a trade war that would have, among other implications, the likelihood of making it more difficult for us to achieve the settlement by

negotiation that is in the interests of Canada, that is in the interests of France, and that is particularly in the interests of fishermen in Newfoundland.

[Translation]

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, we have had a whole series of incidents, and the latest one is a serious slap in the face of this country.

[English]

INTERESTS OF PEOPLE OF NEWFOUNDLAND

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): I ask the Minister, Mr. Speaker, is it not correct, in saying that the Government does not want to expand this matter into a trade war, that the Minister is confirming that the Conservative Government is putting the interests of the people of Newfoundland second to its desire to buy a nuclear submarine and the Airbus from France? It is trading off the interests of the fishermen of Newfoundland and the people of this whole country for purposes that are not in this country's interest? The Minister has said that in his answer to the first question. Why will he not confirm it now, to the shame of himself and his Government?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, not only is the allegation of the House Leader of the Liberal Party absolutely false, it is also an attempt to sow divisions in this country, an attempt which I personally regard as contemptible, and should not be carried out by responsible parliamentarians.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): The reason we have the incident that is now occurring in St. Pierre is because in 1972 the Liberal Government of the day agreed to a treaty which defined the waters in question as French waters. I believe the Hon. Member was a member of that Government, was a supporter of that Government. If he was concerned about the implications of the 1972 treaty he should have raised that concern in 1972 and not waited for a decade and a half.

● (1140)

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT NOT PURCHASE NUCLEAR POWERED SUBMARINES FROM FRANCE

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Canadians know that it is foolish enough to attempt to purchase nuclear submarines from any country in the world, but it is compounding the folly for Canada to be proceeding with negotiations to purchase these submarines from a country that has deliberately provoked us, a country that snubbed the Head of State of Canada on her visit to that country last fall, and a country that has deliberately ignored Canadian quotas aimed at the conservation of the fishery.