

Oral Questions

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the only thing incredible is the hon. gentleman's allegations in his question. There is no sanctioning of overfishing by the French in Canadian waters or in disputed waters. The French are agreeing to reduce their catch in disputed waters by 10,000 tonnes a year, which is a considerable accomplishment, and to allow inspection by Canadian inspectors, 12 inspections a year, and for the first time to give accurate data on catches.

I want to refer the hon. gentleman to what was said by Richard Cashin, head of the fishermen's union.

We now have a settlement. It is probably the best that we could have done. We have, I suppose, the frame work before us now to ultimately resolve the very serious problem that affected fishermen primarily in the south coast of Newfoundland. . . nobody likes all the parts of it but I accept what Mr. Crosbie has said.

If it is good enough for Cashin, then it should be good enough for the Leader of the NDP.

• (1450)

FRENCH OVERFISHING

Hon. Roger E. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister for International Trade, my distinguished fellow countryman from St. John's West. As he is now painfully aware, the Government's knuckling under to a foreign country reached a new low last week with the fish agreement with France.

I ask the Minister, given that the French have flagrantly overfished in 3PS for the last four years ever since this Government took office and that the fishery on the South coast of Newfoundland is a wipe-out this year because of French overfishing, why did he agree to the cave-in to the French?

How can he say with a straight face that this deal is in the best interests of Newfoundland and Newfoundland fishermen? In short, why did he, the Minister from St. John's West, pawn his birthright over this issue and why did he put the shaft to 15,000 fishermen and plant workers on the south coast of Newfoundland?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, this Government has acted to protect and save the fishermen of the south coast of Newfoundland. Once this matter is settled by an international tribunal, the boundaries will be set on the south coast of Newfoundland. The disputed zone will exist no

longer. Canadian fishing laws and regulations will be in effect and their long term future will be secured because we have taken a long-term approach.

I would like to point out to the hon. gentleman that in 1982 the then Liberal Government entered into an agreement with the EEC giving them 9,500 tonnes of northern cod for six years, 57,000 tonnes of northern cod they handed over to the European Community and 9,270 thousand tonnes of that went to the French. Where was the hon. gentleman then?

Mr. Clyde Wells said this on October 28, 1987:

The EEC is giving up their share, some 9,500 tonnes. That quantity can be used to bargain reasonably with France and give France a significant portion of that 9,500 tonnes and try and bargain reasonably without in any way impacting on the inshore fisheries or Canadian fisheries in the area.

When he said that, the Hon. Member was a member of his caucus and we never heard one peep out of him when he said that.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Roger E. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, the Minister can quote Comrade Cashin all he wants.

Mr. Crosbie: What about Comrade Wells?

Mr. Simmons: Why does he not quote Buchanan who says it is a give-away, or temporary Premier Rideout who says it is a betrayal? Even his bosom pals in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia are disowning this cowardly deal.

I ask the Minister from St. John's West how he can stomach the situation that his political masters have put him in. What—

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Hon. Member to put his question.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister, why does he continue to hang out with this bunch of weak-kneed amateurs who could not negotiate their way out of a wet paper bag? Why won't he consider washing his hands—

Mr. Speaker: I suppose there is a question there.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I think I can discern at least an answer. Would the hon. gentleman explain to the Members of the House why in 1980 the previous Liberal Government entered into an agreement—