

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

The border between Canada and the U.S. stretches in a westerly direction from an area close to the mainland out to a point, Cape Muzon, at the southern tip of one of the islands which are in fact in the state of Alaska. We all know that one side of a border of that nature belongs to one country and the other side belongs to the other. We have always considered the side south of that border to be Canadian and its side north to be American.

When I inquired of the Secretary of State for External Affairs today what action was being taken with respect to preserving our integrity and our sovereignty in that area, he said we have declared that it is Canadian waters but that the Americans do not agree. They certainly do not agree, and they have not agreed for some period of time this summer and even before that. I saw an American chart some years ago which showed the three-mile territorial sea of the U.S. extending three miles southward from the border itself. In other words, the Americans claimed that not only did their territory go up to the border between our two lands but it also extended three miles into Canada.

This is the attitude that coastguard vessels have in the Alaskan waters right now, because this year they have chased Canadian fishermen using Canadian registered fishing boats and fishing in Canadian waters. They have chased those boats in Canadian waters, undertook one arrest and have attempted other arrests and harassment of Canadians fishing in Canadian waters, which I think would be an act of war if it were to take place between two other countries which did not consider themselves to be as friendly as Canada and the U.S. But in all of this intrusion and invasion—not to the territorial waters of Canada but to the inland waters because they are inside our border—by American coastguards, their harassment and arrest of Canadian fishermen has gone almost unnoticed by the Canadian government.

• (10:10 p.m.)

We send protest notes to somebody in Washington about it, but when it comes to dealing in a really substantial way with the problem there is silence: not one solitary attempt is made to have any compensation paid to the halibut fishermen who have lost gear and who are being chased out of the area by Yankee coastguard vessels. These men have lost fishing time and have also lost their catches which were seized without any recompense to them. The only attempt is a bland note of some sort that we send to the United States saying, "Look here, we protest and we disagree with what you are doing." That is where matters stand now.

The Americans still claim that area as part of their territorial sea, as an extension of the United States into Canadian territory, and we do not do anything about it.

Mr. Speaker, we have a navy. It does not seem to be doing anything worth while in other parts where it is operating. I would advocate in a positive way that we should put our navy on manoeuvres along that border to show the U.S. coastguard that we really mean business in determining what is Canadian territory.

Some 15 years or more ago the very small country of Iceland, which is largely dependent on fishing, extended its territorial seas to 12 miles off shore and stood up against the might of Great Britain in enforcing its action. This was an extension out into the high seas of territorial waters, from three miles to 12 miles off shore. Surely we have as much pride in our nation and in ourselves as the Icelanders had in their country. Here we are dealing with Canadian territory and an invasion of U.S. coastguard vessels into Canadian waters. I submit that for the Secretary of State for External Affairs and our government just to make a declaration that these are Canadian waters is simply not good enough.

Mr. Albert Béchard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard), in his questions directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) this afternoon and again tonight, has touched upon two problems which have caused great concern to the Canadian government, particularly because of the difficulties being encountered by Canadian fishermen.

In light of recent incidents in Dixon Entrance we have made it clear to the United States that the Canadian government does not accept their authority to interfere with Canadian fishing vessels operating in waters south of the A-B line. That line, of course, was fixed by the 1903 Alaska Boundary Award as the international boundary between Canada and the United States in Dixon Entrance.

Canada has already established an exclusive Canadian fishing zone throughout the whole of Dixon Entrance and does not recognize any extension of the U.S. territorial sea and contiguous fishing zone south of the A-B line. While making Canada's position clear we have indicated our willingness in principle to hold talks with the United States authorities with a view to avoiding further incidents and achieving a satisfactory resolution of the Dixon Entrance problem.

The long-standing Canadian claim to sovereignty over Machias Seal Island is well founded and goes back to the construction of a lighthouse there in 1832. The Canadian government has also made its position clear to the United States in connection with this matter. It is hoped that a resolution of this problem can be achieved without incident and to the satisfaction of the hon. member.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.16 p.m.