

by Canada to encompass only a 12-mile territorial sea around the Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and a separate claim by the other sovereign nation of France to boundaries extending some 180 miles south of the Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon and into the mouth of the St. Lawrence estuary.

● (2030)

In that intervening zone, by all principles of international law, the usual undertaking between governments when there is a dispute—and many of these disputes have arisen since the time the Law of the Sea was adopted in the early 1980s—is to agree to avoid physical confrontation which can lead to war by trying to negotiate an acceptable compromise to reflect adequately the interests and aspirations of both nations.

We, as a nation, and all Canadian people, particularly those of Atlantic Canada and the fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador, feel a very special attachment to the fishery resource which has been part of their history since the first settlers arrived in Newfoundland in the 16th Century and when Jacques Cartier first sailed up the St. Lawrence River and established the French settlements which became Lower Canada.

I was alarmed to hear the Leader of the New Democratic Party suggest that the time for negotiation has run out after 450 years of peace and harmony between our respective countries. Bearing fully in mind the aspirations and the entitlements of the fishermen and people of Atlantic Canada, why it is that the Leader of the NDP says, "Time has run out. We believe the Government of Canada should confront the French, chase them out of Canadian waters, irrespective of history and even, if necessary, confront them with force"? That is a ludicrous proposition coming from a leader of a Party which espouses peace and non-confrontation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Rodriguez: Why did we do it with Spain?

Mr. Siddon: I would like to explain why this is a ludicrous suggestion. I hope Hon. Members over there will give me as much opportunity to respond, and listen in silence, as I have given them.

We have for the first time in the history of our country reached a point where France has initialled an agreement which does little more than agree to negotiate two parallel agreements between now and the end of 1987, one dealing with the unresolved boundary issue, and a second to establish joint fishing arrangements during that three to four-year period when the compulsory third party arbitration process is allowed to take effect.

I think I heard the Leader of the New Democratic Party say that we should find a third party arbitrator. That has been and must be the objective of the Government of Canada in seeking a permanent and lasting resolution to this problem.

I want to say at the very beginning that I and all of my colleagues, the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), and particularly my colleagues from Newfoundland,

understand that to the people of that very beautiful part of Canada there is a feeling about the cod stocks, the groundfish resources of the Grand Banks. It is very close to the hearts of Newfoundlanders and very close to the soul of their province. I want to make it clear before I go into the detail of the agreement that in no way will this Government compromise or diminish the importance of that resource on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland to the continued future and growing prosperity of all of the people in that province whose history is so deeply interwoven with that resource.

We have a problem, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tobin: Yes, you.

Mr. Siddon: If Hon. Members want to be catty, that is their prerogative. I am trying to be reasonable and informative.

This problem was reinforced in 1972 when the Liberal Government entered into a treaty with France, because there had been some disputation in the 1960s over this issue. That treaty, in Article 2, recognizes the right of French nationals to fish in these waters, that is, waters which we now claim to be Canadian within the 200-mile economic zone. While the French agree that those fishing practices will be subject to possible measures for the conservation of resources, they at the same time insisted and continue to insist in all of the bilateral discussions that have been under way that they have a perpetual right to fish, not only in the waters in the disputed area of St. Pierre and Miquelon but in all of the waters which Canada claims to be there for the benefit and in recognition of the sovereignty of the country and our people who depend on that resource.

Since that treaty was signed in 1972, and I must add, that was a time when Hon. Members of the New Democratic Party were very accustomed to supporting their friends in the Liberal Party, they helped to reinforce this agreement to saddle Canada with a perpetual commitment—

Ms. Mitchell: Don't be catty now.

Mr. Shields: That is the truth coming out.

Mr. Siddon: These Hon. Members did not help to resolve the problem either in 1972 or in 1984 when these same Members of the NDP aided and abetted the Liberal Government of the day under Prime Minister Trudeau. At that time the Liberal Government, through an exchange of diplomatic notes with France in June, 1984, agreed that Canada would turn a blind eye to any fishing practices by French national vessels in the disputed area south of St. Pierre and Miquelon. In other words, the international agreement concerned, by an exchange of diplomatic notes—and Members of Liberal Party opposite were in Government at the time—

Mr. Baker: What were the diplomatic notes?

Mr. Benjamin: That is why the Liberals did not move a motion today.