

Oral Questions

Since January 1989 I have been and the government has been bringing this matter to the attention of the governments of the European Community, Spain, Portugal and around the world. We are continuing our efforts.

We congratulate those who are making this demonstration. I have written them of my support and have given them some tangible support as well, something to help the crews along when they get back to shore. I suggest the hon. gentleman do the same.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the minister that it is very easy for him to do something very simple: to sign this international agreement, which is something the government has refused, to make sure we have jurisdiction there.

Ms. Copps: The Law of the Sea, which you still haven't signed.

Mr. Chrétien: I would like to tell the minister that the government should do that. I want to ask him if he is aware that in 1971 we were the only ones to recognize that there was a danger with pollution in the Arctic and unilaterally we passed a law in this Parliament extending our jurisdiction over Arctic waters. Since that day the international community has recognized that we were right.

If we were to do the same thing today with the cod problem at the nose and the tail of the Grand Banks, the international community would recognize that we are doing what is needed to protect the stocks not only for Canadian fishermen but for the fishermen of the world.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that in 1971 the government took an initiative to extend jurisdiction with respect to pollution in Arctic waters. There were no other ships of any country in those Arctic waters at the time that was done. The only country that could possibly be affected was the United States. They were spoken to first and arrangements were entered into with them so that they would not object too vigorously.

The situation is not comparable to an international area where many nations are now fishing on the high seas in that zone there already. It is not comparable, but

I remind the hon. gentleman that in 1972 his government signed a treaty with France which gave it fishing rights forever, without any time limit, within Canadian waters. We are still suffering the results today of that treaty signed in 1972. In 1977 the hon. gentleman's government signed an arrangement with the European Community and gave it the right to fish thousands of tonnes of cod in our waters until we let that die, until we finally got rid of it in 1987.

I would not refer to his record, if I were him, without checking the record first.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister's ignorance is showing. The fact is, whether he likes it or not, the French have territorial rights in the gulf, and the Portuguese and the Spaniards do not. I would ask the minister to act responsibly in order to preserve the resource within Canadian waters. At this very moment, Canadian fishermen cannot fish for cod, while 95 foreign ships are taking the stocks Canadians will be unable to catch this summer.

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, we have to keep this in perspective. There are foreign vessels fishing cod and other species outside the 200-mile limit, and no country that I am aware of recognizes as yet the rights of a coastal state to exercise any jurisdiction over fishing beyond the 200-mile economic zone.

We now have a resolution before the United Nations environmental conference to that effect backed by 40 other nations. We are pushing that vigorously, which is the proper way to go. If all these efforts do not result in meaningful progress then we will examine what other options there are.

In the meantime I remind the hon. gentleman that in 1982 his government allocated to the European Community 8,000 tonnes of non-surplus 2J,3K-L cod; 6,500 tonnes of 2G-H cod; and 7,000 tonnes of squid. We were lucky there was anything left out there by the time his government was pushed out of office in 1984, and he gets up in the House and question our policy.