

*Supply*

would wish that we would act now, escalate this issue even further, if not by a trade war, then by a shooting war, from their perception. We know, Mr. Speaker, that a government has to be far more responsible than that, it has to be methodical and extremely careful in responding to such provocation.

Yesterday the Member for Gander—Twillingate said in this House at about 5.45 p.m., as recorded at page 15188 of *Hansard*:

—at this very moment there is a French patrol vessel towing a 65-foot Canadian dragger that was fishing legally in the disputed zone off the south coast of Newfoundland—

We are told this vessel was fishing within the 12-mile territorial sea of the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon as recognized by the 1972 treaty which a Liberal Government introduced, approved and then remained silent about for some 12 years. The Hon. Member made a false allegation. Had the vessel been apprehended in the disputed zone, you can be assured, Sir, that Canada's response would have been far more swift and it would have been a far more serious provocation of the relationship between these two countries.

The Member then went on to say:

We talk about the attitude of the Canadian Government. I will tell you what its attitude is. Over this vessel being towed flies an RCMP helicopter.

That is not true. Because of the fog in Newfoundland yesterday, there were no aircraft flying in that vicinity of which we have knowledge. I have checked. There were no Coast Guard aircraft in the area. There were no RCMP aircraft in the area. There were no Fisheries aircraft or vessels in the area. The Member went on to say:

Then there is a fixed-wing aircraft belonging to the Coast Guard. There is a fisheries patrol vessel in the area.

Then the Hon. Member went on to suggest:

—that at least what should be done is for the Canadian patrol vessel in the area to stick its nose in front of the French patrol vessel, communicate with it and say, "Look, you are not allowed to arrest somebody aboard a vessel in the disputed zone—"

All of that is rubbish and nonsense, Mr. Speaker. It is an emotional extreme false misrepresentation of a situation which suggests that any persons who would react from the hip in that manner never deserve to sit in the Cabinet of the Government of Canada.

I want to point out in this House that we have made great progress since January 24, 1987, in bringing the French to their senses in realizing that within our Canadian sovereign waters our fish are there for the first benefit of Canadian fishermen. We have, therefore, taken a number of important steps to persuade France and, indeed, where it was necessary, to take forceful action to ensure that the interests of our fishermen are held over and above all other obligations which France or other countries might feel we have to them.

• (1310)

I wish to point out that our over-all effort in this initiative has been unprecedented in Canadian history. It is to protect

Canadian interests in the Atlantic area in the face of these difficulties which have developed with France.

Second, this is the first time anyone has interfered with the activities of the small-boat fishermen off the south coast of Newfoundland, the little guys in the inshore fishery, so to speak, who have traditionally fished on both sides of that inshore area between the Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon and the Burin Peninsula. This is the first time that traditional arrangement has ever been challenged as it was yesterday, and in that respect, Canada will not stand idly by and allow this to happen.

Our principal objective is to settle once and for all the boundary question around the French Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. I am told that back in 1972 when Mr. Jamieson and Mr. Sharp and others were in the Cabinet of Canada, they had an opportunity to accept a boundary which would set the limit of the extent of French sovereignty around St. Pierre and Miquelon to something like 20 miles, but they refused to accept that very, very attractive offer which would have prevented all of these problems from occurring. It would have meant that our fishermen would not have had to deal with French overfishing and French presence within our waters or within a disputed zone extending some 180 miles to the south of these islands.

The activities of these vessels are putting our stocks at great risk. We want to settle that boundary question and to establish clearly, beyond a shadow of a doubt, Canada's sovereign right, our right, not some other foreign country's right, not some opposition Party's right but the Government of Canada's right to conserve and manage the fish stocks in the area off the south coast of Newfoundland for the benefit of our fishermen. We have taken unprecedented steps in this regard to limit the French fisheries in Canadian waters to their traditional quotas under the 1972 Canada-France treaty, taking into account the expiration of the metropolitan fishing rights in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1986.

When the Liberal Government of 1972 signed an agreement with France, it included the right for large freezer trawlers which became factory freezer trawlers based in France, in St. Malo, principally, to come across the Atlantic and fish in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. This was pointed out by the Hon. Member for Port au Port—St. Barbe. They fished in the Gulf of St. Lawrence for 15 years by the will and with the consent of a Liberal Government, and each year of the last five years they took in excess of 21,000 tonnes of fish from that area, of which all but 4,000 were sent back to France for processing.

We have ended that practice. It was this Government which ended that practice and removed that presence from the gulf so that that resource could be turned over to the people of the ridings of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, including those of the riding of the Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud). We are patriating those resources for the benefit of our fishermen.