

until farmers have made up their own minds based on market signals, particularly in view of the fact that the seed drills have not been pulled out of the implement sheds, let alone triggered into the ground.

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FISHERIES

CLOSURE OF PORTS TO FRENCH FISHING VESSELS

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, today's headlines read: "Canadian Ports Closed to French Fishermen"; and "Vessels Will Be Arrested Outside Disputed Zone"; and "Government Acts Against Overfishing".

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: The only problem is that the French fleet does not use Canadian ports, the French do not fish outside the disputed zone, and the entire French fleet to which the Government has now closed Canadian ports has already gone back to France.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gauthier: Come on, John.

Mr. Baker: I ask the Minister of Transport, assigned by the Prime Minister to answer these questions and make statements in Newfoundland: why close the ports when the French do not use them; why forbid them to fish where they do not fish anyway; why have you made these statements after the French have already gone home? The Minister of Transport said: "This is a clear signal". We say that it is a smoke signal: "Heap big smoke, no fire".

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, we know the Hon. Member imagines himself to be an actor, but one wonders when he will get his act together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Siddon: On one day we hear the Hon. Member and his colleagues asking the Government to be firm and tough. The next day he is standing up in the House to say: "Why bother?" The inconsistency of the Member in his continued questions on this issue is regrettable and unhelpful. We announced our undertaking to close the ports and close the French fishing quota in the area known as 3PS because, according to our estimates, France has exceeded the quota which Canada accords to French-based vessels in that area. If this measure will not be effective, why is it that France has protested so strongly today?

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Mr. Baker: The Minister of Fisheries finally stands up and answers a question on that subject. He reminds me of a whale which is usually below the surface but every now and then comes up to blow.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Are we now to assume from this statement that the French fleet can return to Canada in the fall, as they always do, and fish now unlimited in the disputed zone out to 200 miles, as they always do, as long as they go into the same ports that they always use? What is the Government up to? Has it assumed the same position and the same style as Premier Peckford with his intellectual terrorism? I am sure the French fishermen are shaking in their rubber boots.

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I heard a question, but if there is any whale in this House which has learned to blow hard, it is the Hon. Member opposite.

What is so puzzling is that this Hon. Member sat and did nothing in 1972 as a member of that Government. When the Treaty was signed which led us into this debacle, this Hon. Member sat in his seat in 1976 while his Government cut off the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, cut off its nose and tail to spite its face, so to speak, which has denied Canadian fishermen their right and proper due. We are in the process of ensuring that those resources are conserved and managed to the benefit of the fishermen of Newfoundland and Labrador and, indeed, of all Atlantic Canada.

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AGRICULTURE

ASSISTANCE FOR FARMERS—GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture seemed, by his previous answer to my Leader, to be saying that farmers cannot be expected to know what sort of assistance intention the Government has for them in this coming year. Could he expand on that a little and explain why he thinks farmers should not know the position of the federal Government with regard to financial assistance when we know and he knows, and all the Canadian farmers know, that their American counterparts have been guaranteed between \$35 billion and \$36 billion over the next five years? American farmers know where they are at. Why can the Minister not tell us where our farmers are at?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member knows full well the answer to the question. He knows full well the reason that I at this point in time have to respond and if I had the choice of standing with the New Democratic Party or standing with the farm leaders