

Oral Questions

Mr. Tobin: Let you try to find your backbone, Joe Clark. You haven't got one.

Mr. Crosbie: Simulated simpleton.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead):—on the record.

The Hon. Member referred earlier to two treaties. One was the Terms of Union Newfoundland signed in 1949. In our judgment that was a political decision that we celebrate, but which needs to be accompanied by consistent policies to develop the standard of living and the level of opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is what this Government has done consistently.

The other treaty has to do with 1972. The issue in question last night has to do with a definition of French waters that was agreed to by the Liberal Government of Canada in a 1972 treaty signed by the Liberal Government of Canada. That is the reality. If the Hon. Member, a member of the Liberal Party, disagreed with what his Government did then, we should have heard from him then, not several years too late.

• (1130)

RELATIONS BETWEEN NEWFOUNDLANDERS AND CITIZENS OF
ST. PIERRE AND MIQUELON

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The Minister knows very well that the relationship between the Canadians who live in Newfoundland and the French citizens who live in St. Pierre and Miquelon has for years been without conflict. They have enjoyed each other's company socially and have worked well together.

The Minister will also know that this action by the French Government in the past 24 hours, if one considers where the action was taken and the size of the vessel under question, is totally unacceptable.

Has the Government of Canada informed the French Government that the very good relationships that have existed between the people of Newfoundland and the French citizens of St. Pierre and Miquelon are the serious matters that are at risk in the short run, and are at risk in the long run?

If the Government has so informed the French Government, have we made it very clear that it has to be held responsible if there is now major conflict between two groups of people who have always been good friends?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, what we have done this morning is called in the Ambassador to Canada of France and protested to him the action of last night. We have made it clear that our interpretation, an interpretation to our understanding shared by France through several years, has been that it would be allowed that smaller fishermen from St. Pierre and Miquelon would be able to fish in Canadian waters, and smaller fishermen from Newfoundland would be able to fish in French waters. That has been the practice for some time. We believe

that traditional practice should continue. We have protested the action of France which is inconsistent with that practice.

We intend to continue to support the fishermen of Canada, particularly the small inshore fishermen involved in this dispute.

ROLE OF FRENCH PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, the whole international world that is following this incident understands full well that it is the action of a desperate man who is seeking the presidential office in France, who is running well behind the current President of France, and is taking it out on the people of Newfoundland.

Has the Secretary of State for External Affairs made it very clear to the present Government of France that mixing serious international obligations for short run political gain at home is the very antithesis of good international relations?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, what we have done, and I repeat this, is protested the matter to the Government of France. The Hon. Member understands the practices of international relations between countries, and that is the manner in which we have proceeded in this case. If the event is not resolved in the next several hours, we will naturally consider what other steps we should be taking.

I think the Hon. Member may also know that meetings were scheduled for this morning between the two negotiators of this larger dispute to discuss a mediation process. At my instruction the Canadian negotiator has suspended those meetings respecting mediation.

I understand the depth of the issues involved here. I have been following this file very closely myself with my colleagues, the Minister for International Trade, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and with others. We know the depth of interest of Canadians involved here. We intend to protect those Canadian interests, and we intend to protect them against sudden events that may arise, for whatever reason, in France.

We are proceeding consistently, and we are proceeding in a way that we believe will advance the interests of Canada in terms of the dispute that is now in place, and advance the interests of fishermen in Newfoundland and elsewhere in Atlantic Canada.

[Translation]

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER SPEAK TO HIS FRENCH
COUNTERPART

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my last question for the Minister is this: The Prime Minister of France has made similar decisions and taken similar action in the past. This is not exactly new, coming from this gentleman. Would the Minister speak directly to the Prime Minister of Canada,