

*Supply*

referred to by the Hon. Member. The economy and the people of the islands have depended on the surrounding resource as their main sustenance and their main reason for being on this side of the Atlantic. We also appreciate that. The Government has always wanted to be understanding and supportive of the people who live on St. Pierre and Miquelon. In some respects they are being exploited or used as a pawn in this international debate.

The agreement of 1972 was designed to phase out the Gulf fishery by a fleet from Metropolitan France, which in times past have not fished in the tens of thousands of tonnes which they did claim for that 15 year phase-out period. But it recognized, and France recognized, that at the end of the 15-year period, they were to be gone. As well, it recognized that unspecified quotas would be available in other parts of Atlantic Canada, once boundaries were extended and jurisdiction established.

• (1400)

The Hon. Member would appreciate that that jurisdiction cannot be finally established until the boundary around St. Pierre and Miquelon is resolved through international arbitration.

There was recognition in the treaty that the small boats operating out of St. Pierre and Miquelon should have certain basic quotas, and that is something to which we have attempted to be sensitive.

In my view, the treaty provides the possibility for solution, but it is something that will only start with the resolution of the boundary question. Certainly, this Government wants to be reasonable in its approach to this whole matter.

My question for the Hon. Member is whether he would not agree that the debate which was triggered on January 24, 1987, has a great deal to do with the progress that we have been able to make to date, in an orderly way. During that debate, Canada has shown that we are not going to play second fiddle to anyone in looking after the rights and needs of our fishermen.

Will the Hon. Member not agree that Canadian public opinion, not just in Newfoundland but from coast to coast, and indeed international opinion, has been polarized to recognize the basic justice of Canada's appeal that the boundary matter be resolved?

I have a second question for the Hon. Member. In view of the historical perspective of the Hon. Member, I would ask for his view as to why France would take actions which would appear to hurt its own citizens, the people of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

**Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon):** Mr. Speaker, there are moments when those watching the telecast of these proceedings see the House operating at its best, and certainly the exchange we are having at the moment is a good one.

I should like to pick up on some of the thoughts that the Minister has articulated, and to respond to them.

The importance of developing Canadian opinion in support of firm action by the Canadian Government is obvious. In terms of the agreement entered into in January of 1987, we had a fire-storm of protest in Newfoundland, and reaction in the House on the part of many Members. As the Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon, a riding located on that large inland sea, Lake Superior, I join with others in support of a motion moved by a Newfoundland Member. In fact, the member of the NDP caucus who preceded me in this debate was the Member for Vancouver Island.

While the motion itself was moved by a Newfoundland Member, it is a motion that expresses, for Canadians generally, as happened in January of 1987, the importance of taking the appropriate and proper action.

We had the same reaction, of course, in January of 1987, when as well we had forceful representations made to the then Minister of Transport, the Hon. Member for St. John's West on the question of taking appropriate action in respect of the agreement entered into at that time.

The motion moved by the Official Opposition today calling upon the Government of Canada to take strong action in connection with this matter is very important in terms of making it possible for the Government of Canada to do the right thing.

The Minister, in the preamble to his question, talked about the importance of the history of this dispute. He spoke of the terms of the agreement and the importance of settling the boundaries dispute.

I can assure him in that respect that the notes provided by the Hon. Member for St. John's East in connection with this debate focused on the importance of the boundaries question and the fact that it is a matter that has to be resolved.

The background notes state that the dispute on the boundary should be referred to international and binding arbitration, without either party insisting upon any pre-conditions, such as access by the French to northern cod. If in a 16-year old or 17-year old treaty there is a promise of access to be had somewhere or other in the future, one might find people in External Affairs, given the calibre of advisers the Government surely has, to put context to that.

Was this access that would be worked out following on the resolution of the boundary question? And if so, then obviously the French are walking away from the bargaining table. If they are refusing to negotiate properly, they would have no right to access, with the result that it would remain unspecified—meaning, presumably, at zero, until France is prepared to settle the matter. Part of the settlement of the boundary question will be to arrive at the proper quotas for France, thus constituting recognition of their rights for all time in the future.