

Inquiries of the Ministry

Ozere, assistant deputy minister, Department of Fisheries. We are also fortunate in having the services of a distinguished member of the academic world, Professor George Curtis, dean of the school of law, University of British Columbia, who will be a member of the delegation.

The first conference approved 113 articles under four conventions, on the territorial sea, the high seas, high seas fishing and the continental shelf. Agreement at the forthcoming conference on the breadth of the territorial sea and the fishing jurisdiction of coastal states in the contiguous zone would complete the codification of the law of the sea and thereby mark a tremendous stride forward by the international community in the direction of international order based on international law. As the sixth largest fishing nation in the world and the country with the largest coastline, the forthcoming conference is of particular importance to Canada. It is the intention of the government to take an important initiative at the conference by putting forward a proposal for a six-mile territorial sea and for a twelve-mile fishing zone reserved exclusively for the fishermen of the coastal state.

During the past year Canada has been actively seeking support for this proposal. The government has held discussions in a large number of capitals and has engaged in a series of exchanges of views with countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe. We will continue a vigorous effort in the weeks before the conference and at the conference itself to seek support for this proposal, which we believe is a practicable and workable compromise between the positions of those states, the Soviet bloc and others, on the one hand, which favour a twelve-mile territorial sea, and those maritime states, the United Kingdom, the United States and others, on the other hand, which are seeking to preserve a narrow territorial sea and historic fishing rights.

As a part of these activities the Canadian government has distributed a pamphlet printed in our two official languages and also in Spanish, which has been made available to all members of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. This pamphlet explains the Canadian proposal and, we believe, demonstrates that it would now seem to offer the best hope of reaching agreement at the conference. Because of its general interest and importance, I now wish to table this pamphlet in English and in French, copies of which will be distributed to hon. members.

[Mr. Green.]

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): May I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs a supplementary question. In view of the wide divergence that prevailed between the positions taken by the government of Canada and the governments of the United Kingdom, France and the United States on this matter, can the minister say whether or not these have been reconciled since the last conference?

Mr. Green: Mr. Speaker, we are figuring out these things for ourselves, arriving at our own conclusions and taking action accordingly. In this case we hope to be able to convince some of these western countries and also some of the eastern countries that the Canadian plan is the best plan.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I was not asking the Secretary of State for External Affairs whether or not his arm had been twisted. I was simply asking, for purposes of clarification—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Martin (Essex East):—whether or not the gap had been narrowed between the views held by the government of Canada at the last conference and those held by the governments of the United Kingdom, the United States and France. I am sure the minister would want, on the occasion—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Martin (Essex East):—of the first statement to be made by him in the house this session, to give a reply consistent with the kind of attitude he wishes to take so far as the foreign policy of this country is concerned.

Mr. Green: There is some divergence of opinion between the different countries. It is not a case of one country adopting one formula and a lot of other countries lining up behind it. Different interests arise, as the hon. member will appreciate. We are hoping it will be possible to get the support of two thirds of the countries represented at the conference for the Canadian formula.

The same formula was put forward at the conference in 1958, along with several other proposals; and, as the hon. member knows, at that time it was impossible for any of the proposals to get a two thirds majority. The result was that on this particular question, which really is the most important question having to do with the law of the sea, the 1958 conference failed.

We believe that the Canadian proposal, which the hon. member will see in the pamphlet, is a reasonable compromise. We already have a great deal of support, but we are hoping to be able to obtain sufficient additional support to win a two thirds majority.