

Privilege—Mr. Desjardins

Government knuckled under to the Government of France in allowing French inspectors to board our vessels within our 100-mile limit.

To add insult to injury, we now find that prior notice must be given to the Government of France to let it know when our inspectors will board its vessels. Will the Minister tell us why those silly conditions were put in the agreement and how many inspections have taken place to date?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that on reflection the Hon. Member will admit that this infamous deal, as he describes it, will bring untold and permanent benefit to the fishermen of his constituency.

The Hon. Member understands that the essence of the dispute was an area to the south of the Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon which both countries claimed. Is it understood, Mr. Speaker, that we are talking about a disputed zone which Canada claims is Canadian and which France claims is French? The French agreed to reduce their overfishing by more than 10,000 tonnes per year in the disputed zone, and we arranged with France that we would have our inspectors board their vessels and they would board our vessels for the purpose of ensuring that the landings records, which were kept by each country when their offshore trawlers fish in the disputed zone, were accurate.

• (1500)

This process is ongoing at present. I am advised that a Canadian fisheries officer is presently on board the French patrol vessel *Rhones* for the very purpose of inspecting the daily records of catch to ensure that France does not exceed its commitment to not overfish in the disputed zone.

Mr. Simmons: I understand it full well, Mr. Speaker. But does the Minister understand which side he is supposed to be fighting for on this issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

OVERFISHING IN DISPUTED WATERS

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, if the purpose of this exercise is to monitor

French overfishing that is a sick joke and the Minister knows it.

Given the prior notice, which must be like the RCMP saying it will only enforce impaired driving charges two nights a week or something—because he has to have the element of surprise—

Mr. Speaker: I ask the co-operation of the Hon. Member. Given the time I asked for a short supplementary. It will be a short supplementary, please.

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister, how will we know that the French are not continuing to rape our stocks as they have done with his blessing during the past four years?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I think the House would want to know for which side the Government is fighting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Siddon: The Hon. Member will want to know that the Government is fighting for the constituents of the riding of Burin—St. George's which is more than he did as a member of the Government which condoned French fishing in our waters—legal French fishing—

Mr. Simmons: Not true.

Mr. Siddon: —in the amount of 28,000 tonnes per year, an amount which we have reduced to approximately 12,000 tonnes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Desjardins) wishes to raise a question of privilege. The Hon. Member for Témiscamingue.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. DESJARDINS—RINGING OF BELL FOR VOTE

Mr. Gabriel Desjardins (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a question of privilege because last night, my rights as a parliamentarian were breached. When the vote was called last night at 6 p.m., as scheduled, I was involved in a working session with two colleagues and three other people in Room 523 of the Wellington Building. None of the six people present, Mr.