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Finally, the agreement provides that scientists of both countries will meet soon to assess cod stocks south of Newfoundland and the impact continued overfishing by the French might have on these stocks. Hopefully this joint study will produce concrete evidence likely to prompt the French Government to review its overfishing policy and reduce its fishing activities to prevent total stock depletion.

Mr. Speaker, I know that people are very disappointed and that many criticisms are being voiced because nothing has been done under the terms of the agreement to prevent France from overfishing on such a wide scale in waters south of Newfoundland. It is indeed a serious problem. There is no doubt that French fishermen catch about 26,000 tonnes of cod a year—at least 20,000 tonnes over the 6,400-tonne quota which Canada allotted to them in this zone and which amounts to a fair share of the stock traditionally earmarked for France.

Unfortunately, the Government of Canada can do nothing for the time being to reduce this overfishing. We cannot exercise coercion, even if the area is ours, because France claims that a sizeable portion of this zone belongs to its territory. Furthermore, our mutual agreement to refrain from enforcing the rules is the usual approach taken by countries in such situations to avoid any military confrontation that might endanger the fishing fleet at sea.

Since coercion cannot be used, we have done our best to convince the French that their activities off the south coast of Newfoundland are unreasonable and that their overfishing represents a threat to the livelihood of both Newfoundland and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon fishermen who depend on the same stock. These arguments met with no success. The French refused out of hand to reduce their fishing in this area. We know that their own compatriots, the fishermen from Saint-Pierre et Miquelon, have asked for a reduction in fishing by the French fleet and that the French Government has ignored their appeals.

We have not offered and will not offer them the fish they want in sensitive areas like 2J+3KL, to persuade them to reduce overfishing off the south coast of Newfoundland.

We cannot and will not be blackmailed. We shall continue to put pressure on France and demand that it reduce excessive fishing activity off the south coast of Newfoundland and bring its catches down to the fair quota of 6,400 tonnes set by Canada for France in that zone. We shall continue to support the efforts of the people of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon to persuade the French Government to take the requested action and we shall reiterate these requests during negotiations from 1988 to 1991 on French quotas in Canadian waters.

Mr. Speaker, we shall not cave on this issue, not in 1987 and not from 1988 to 1991, but we firmly believe that the only way to achieve a final settlement and ensure that a reasonable conservation system is set up for the zones off the south coast of Newfoundland is to settle the boundary dispute in that region. We believe that an international tribunal will confirm Canada's position on the location of the boundary and

establish that all major fishing areas come under Canadian jurisdiction and management. Such a ruling will make it possible to eliminate the problem of French overfishing off the south coast of Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, we must ask all those for whom fishing by the French in Canadian waters is a crucial issue to be patient and to give us their trust. The Government realizes how important the fisheries are to the people of Atlantic Canada, and we are fully aware that we owe nothing to France or to any country. Although we have certain obligations under agreements concluded with France, and we intend to observe those, the agreements concern fish quotas that are much lower than what France is demanding now. We are forced to make concessions that go beyond the obligations provided for in the agreements in order to be able to bring the boundary question before an international tribunal. Once that question has been resolved, the quotas granted France in Canadian waters will be strictly in accordance with our obligations under the 1972 agreement.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my speech I alluded to the history of this whole question. In fact, our present problem is only one phase, in fact the latest phase in a long process that started about 400 years ago when Canada was colonized and the French fishing fleet started to work the Northwest Atlantic. During that time, the fisheries gave rise to a number of disputes. The problems arose and were resolved. Treaties were negotiated and later replaced by other agreements.

The latest phase goes back to the end of the sixties when the Government of Canada decided to close the Gulf of St. Lawrence to all foreign fishing fleets, including the French. It was this decision that led to the 1972 fisheries agreement between Canada and France. An important step was taken in 1986 when, in accordance with the agreement, the French metropolitan fishing fleet left the waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, never to return.

Mr. Speaker, we must now deal with the repercussions of this decision, since the French, during the fifteen years they were allowed, failed to establish a development plan for their fleet after it left the Gulf. We must now deal with the fallout from this decision, settle the boundary dispute and determine once and for all what real rights France has under the 1972 Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, all this will take a few more years, but I am convinced that, thanks to the Paris Agreement, we are well on our way to resolving all these problems.

• (2220)

[English]

**Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt):** Mr. Speaker, in this debate I am not promoting myself as an expert on the Newfoundland fishery. What I do want the people of Newfoundland to understand is that a person from central Canada, from a land-locked riding with no fishery at all, understands and is sensitive to the fact that they have one major resource. I do not bring to this debate the expertise of my hon. friends from