

Oral Questions

planned. How does the Minister explain that fundamental contradiction?

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, there is no contradiction nor confusion except in the mind of the Hon. Member. What is true is that those inspections are routinely made in May and June each year. But this year, because of this, they were advanced. That is the only thing that happened.

TRANSPORTATION OF DANGEROUS GOODS ACT

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Having had a clear signal from the Hon. Member as to what his intention is, I would ask him to go ahead with his question.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of the Environment. I thought it was always understood that while a number of Departments have responsibility to enforce Acts like the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, they have to work at the border in co-operation with the Department of National Revenue. If that is the case, why did the Minister and his officials fail to get the immediate and full assistance of customs people across the country such that they would do something effective on this? Why did the Minister of National Revenue and his people learn about this matter only on Monday? Is this not proof of a clear dereliction of duty by the Minister of the Environment and his Government?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the information we received, which the Department received, was connected with the environment. It was about toxic substances that might or might not have crossed the Canadian border illegally. That is why the matter was handled by the Department of the Environment. There had been no fiscal implications so far. There is no connection between fiscal responsibility and the environmental issue.

REQUEST FOR MINISTER'S RESIGNATION

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister was really concerned about the health of Canadians, why did he keep these serious problems a

secret? Why didn't the Minister immediately get in touch with his opposite numbers at Customs and Excise? Why did he keep this important information to himself?

Mr. Speaker, the Minister is obviously not capable of performing his duties and should resign, and with him the Minister of State (Transport).

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Hon. Member that I have no intention of resigning, and that with the support of the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the entire Conservative Party, I intend to carry out this very important mission that we all have, which is to protect the environment in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

• (1500)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: I wish to advise Hon. Members that there will be a single question from the Hon. Member for Winnipeg Transcona.

SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I want to give the Minister of the Environment an opportunity to do something of a preventive fashion with respect to the environment instead of having to act after the fact, as in the case that we have been discussing.

The Minister will know of the concern of the citizens of Winnipeg about the potential damage to their water supply, thanks to the application by Consolidated Professor Mining to start up a mine in the middle of Shoal Lake in the drinking water supply.

Will the Minister rise in the House today and commit himself to using every federal power at his disposal, plus bring in a Canadian safe drinking water Act that will make this type of madness, having a mine that produces arsenic right in the middle of our water supply, impossible?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, as a Manitoban, I share the view of the Hon. Member, that the drinking supply of Winnipeg must be secure. It is an issue that has been dealt with a number of times in the House and on a number of topics. In each case members of the Government have