

Oral Questions

They are, therefore, covered within the future scope of the agreement although the Prime Minister said they would not be.

Why does the final text not reflect the Prime Minister's assurances given to the less favoured regions of Canada that regional development would not be touched? Why did the Prime Minister not protect the regions of Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, may I say in English that which I just had occasion to say in French. My hon. friend's preface is loaded with flaws and inaccuracies which thwart any truth at all in the subsequent question which he tries to put forward.

He asks me whether I read the deal before I signed it. I read it all right. He did not read it before he announced he was going to tear it up. There is the fundamental difference.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, the important question of regional development was very carefully considered by the negotiators and by the Government throughout. It has been totally protected—

Some Hon. Members: Where?

Mr. Mulroney: —as an instrument of economic growth in Canada—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rodriguez: Your nose is growing.

Mr. Mulroney: —which is one of the reasons 19 associations endorsed the Free Trade Agreement this morning as being profoundly in Canada's national interest. They include the Automotive Industries Association, the Canadian Association of Equipment Distributors, the Canadian Agricultural Policy Alliance, the Canadian Chemical Producers Association, the Canadian Construction Association, the Canadian Export Association, the Mining Association of Canada, the Retail Council of Canada, the Tourism Industries Association of Canada, and the Trust Companies Association of Canada—everybody except the Liberal Party of Canada.

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FISHERIES**SHELLFISH HEALTH WARNING—EFFECT ON LOBSTER AND SHRIMP INDUSTRIES**

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Last Friday the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of National Health and Welfare issued a joint press release alerting Canadians not to consume shellfish from Atlantic Canada. "Shellfish" means lobsters, crabs, and

shrimp—all crustaceans, as well as molluscs, which include mussels, oysters, and quahogs.

My understanding is that the release was withdrawn after a few hours, but not before terrible damage had been done to the industry, especially the lobster and shrimp industries.

Why did the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans allow his name to appear on that erroneous press release which was so damaging to the fishing industry? Does the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans not know the difference between a scallop and a mussel, or a mussel and a quahog?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the gentleman and the House must recognize that on Friday—and I have given the times when the information came to me—Canadians had been hospitalized. One Canadian had died because of the toxins. Evidence showed that the problem was no longer geographically contained. In addition, for the first time we had a clear indication that species other than mussels were involved.

I therefore took a health decision. In fact the Member's Leader, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, said in the House on December 8 that public health must always be a priority. It was on the basis of that priority that the decision was taken.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, health must always be a priority but that erroneous press release included lobster, shrimp, and other products which had nothing to do with the problems which were at hand.

REQUEST FOR RESIGNATIONS OF TWO MINISTERS

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I will direct my supplementary question to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. I am not questioning the character of either the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans or the Minister of National Health and Welfare. However, I am questioning the judgment of those two Ministers which had such a devastating effect on the shellfish industry in Atlantic Canada.

Will the Prime Minister do the honourable thing today and ask for the resignations of both the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of National Health and Welfare? Those two Ministers are totally incompetent and should be fired today.

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, in answer to that question, decisions were taken on the basis of investigations relative to mussels and the information that I received on the morning of the Friday in question. The Member says that there has been damage done. The alert went out at eleven o'clock of that day, at 12.27 on the CP wire. It included lobsters and shrimps and scallops—not by this Minister, and at 12.46, in fact 19 minutes later, it already was corrected.

The greatest damage is that we cannot clear up a health problem. We have not yet found out what the toxin is or what