

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***FISHERIES****SALE OF CANNED TUNA—REJECTION BY DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Knowing that the Deputy Prime Minister should have been concerned about the health of all Canadians, did he inform the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's Office that two shipments of rancid tuna were rejected by the Department of National Defence? When did he communicate that information to the Prime Minister or his office? Or, did he keep the fishy details to himself?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): That information, Mr. Speaker, came to my attention on Wednesday, September 18, and it was part of the over-all circumstances that were taken into account by me—

Mr. Broadbent: What?

Mr. Nielsen:—on the instructions of the Prime Minister, in the immediate action that was taken by the Government to meet the situation.

PREMIER HATFIELD—COMMUNICATIONS INQUIRY

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. Did the Prime Minister have any telephone conversations or written correspondence with Premier Richard Hatfield? What discussions took place between himself and his Minister of Forestry regarding this situation?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I can only respond for myself, Mr. Speaker. The question to me was whether I had conversations in this regard with Premier Hatfield. The answer is no.

PRIME MINISTER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Prime Minister. According to the press reports we have, and compiling a list of all the people who knew about the tuna situation, we know that as of today—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Order.

Mr. Chrétien:—the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Prime Minister, in addition to the man in charge of his liaison with the caucus, Mr. MacAdam, the Minister of Fisheries, the Minister of Health and Welfare, the Minister of Consumer Affairs, and the Department of Justice were aware of it.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Order.

Mr. Chrétien: When will the Prime Minister start to accept some responsibility for that mess and stop looking for scapegoats, forcing the wrong people to resign?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have accepted responsibility. The former Minister of Fisheries in a value judgment that he made submitted his resignation as an honourable gentleman, a concept that would be entirely alien to a Liberal Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deans: That is true.

Mr. Mulroney: The Liberals had a simple premise: no indictment, no resignation.

Ms. Copps: Hold it. You will get yourself into trouble telling the truth.

Mr. Mulroney: As far as we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, the response to the question is that as soon as it was brought to my attention, as I indicated yesterday, in the circumstances I acted properly and with celerity to resolve the matter, and I think that was done.

*[Translation]***ROLE OF PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

According to our information, the Prime Minister's Office had been aware as early as July that Canada's two largest English language television networks were working on a story on the tainted tuna issue, as it is now referred to. Did the Prime Minister give his office instructions to be concerned, above all else, about the Prime Minister's image rather than the health and well-being of Canadians?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): What a surprising question from such a well-known and respected Member of this House!

Yesterday, I answered all questions fully and frankly. Unfortunately, the Hon. Member was not in the House. We have acted at all times with dispatch and in the interests of Canadian consumers.

My hon. friend mentioned the fact that one or two members of my staff were aware of the matter. It is true that Mr. MacAdam, a member of my staff, became aware of the existence of rumours around the first week of July. He got in touch with the Executive Assistant to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and received the assurance that there was no problem.

The second time was around the middle of July when Mr. Anderson, who works in my office, was visited by two staff members of the Minister concerned. He was given the assur-