

Oral Questions

• (1450)

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, if I can be heard through the braying jackals across the way, I want to quote the Minister of Environment from a newspaper report. I refer to *The Citizen*. The story said "But Green said he specifically told Martin and a Bouchard aide that toxic wastes were being transported across the border in fuels". Whether it was gasoline, home heating fuel, whatever it was, it had to be transported. We are not aboard the *Enterprise*. We do not beam it up or down.

I ask the Minister of State for Transport, given that she is responsible for the transportation of dangerous goods, given that she listened in with her cocktail glass in her hand, on a discussion of the movement of dangerous goods—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Tobin: —why did she not undertake her responsibilities herself as well as advising the Minister of Transport?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member just quoted a statement that Mr. Green claims to have made to one of my assistants. Since that assistant is not in the House and cannot defend himself, I may remind the House, and the Hon. Member that, as they know, yesterday this assistant publicly denied that Mr. Green made that statement.

[*English*]

ADVICE TO OTHER MINISTERS

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, you would need the agility of a mental gymnast to follow the convoluted law of this Government. They have now got it that Mr. Green failed in his responsibilities.

Two months ago at an important environmental conference, a very credible individual told a Minister of the Canadian Government that there were suspicions of toxic substances being disguised in fuels of one sort or another.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the Hon. Member could put his question.

Mr. Tobin: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of State for Transport. Will the Minister clarify for the House today, beyond overhearing the conversation and telling us today that she overheard the conversation, did she take any other action? Did the Minister contact the Minister of the Environment or the Minister of National Revenue? Did the Minister advise the senior Minister of Transport? Did the Minister advise her own officials, or did the Minister finish her cocktail and go back home?

Mr. Speaker: There are some things that are of course unparliamentary, and then there are other things that may not quite get there, but in the interests of fairness, we probably should be more careful. The Hon. Member for Skeena.

ALLEGED SMUGGLING

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of State for Transport. Mr. Green has said very clearly that what he told the Minister was that there was toxic and hazardous wastes in fuels. Setting that aside for a moment, the Minister was told that toxic and hazardous waste was being smuggled across the border. With smugglers, it is just a suspicion of smuggling until you catch them. Why did the Minister of State for Transport not immediately tell the Minister responsible for the border, the Minister of Customs, that there was smuggling going on?

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, one thing must be very clear. This general information that was given in Basle was immediately transmitted to Ottawa by a phone call to my Department. My Department is responsible for enforcing the transportation of dangerous goods regulations. That is why the action was taken by my Department in co-operation with the Ontario Government. It was immediately taken. Charges have been laid, and very rigorous inspections have been conducted at the border.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CONTRADICTION RESPECTING INSPECTIONS

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): My supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of the Environment. The Minister of the Environment said to my Leader a few moments ago that after the conference in Switzerland, the number of inspections were advanced. This was flatly contradicted yesterday afternoon by Environment Minister Bradley who said that the inspections were not related to Mr. Green's statements, but were already