

Oral Questions

Mr. Mulroney:—as Minister of the Crown, a very effective representative of British Columbia and a proud Canadian.

Mr. Benjamin: Why don't you take up the violin?

MINISTER'S ACTIONS

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): This is a supplementary to the Minister of Fisheries, Mr. Speaker. With divided opinion, why did not the Minister of Fisheries request the Minister of National Health and Welfare to undertake an independent analysis of the tuna, and did you inform the Minister of National Health and Welfare when you made the decision to release the questionable product?

Hon. John A. Fraser (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, there never was a question of health.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Fraser: There was no question of health because the product was tested in laboratories in Vancouver, Blacks Harbour and in Halifax.

The independent committees that addressed this subject all report that there is no question of health hazard whatsoever. What there is is a question of aesthetics and it is not a completely objective standard. The report commissioned by my own Department says that the former guidelines were vague.

I with the Members of the House would appreciate the fact that repeated allegations of something which is clearly not so do not do any credit to this House nor do they in any way help the fishing industry of this country.

REJECTION OF PRODUCT BY CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Prime Minister. On television last night the Minister clearly admitted what he had done. He clearly said that the company would have the benefit of the doubt in this case. The Armed Forces of Canada, after purchasing \$100,000 worth of this tainted material that was at one point declared unfit for human consumption, examined it and rejected it as unfit for members of the Armed Forces. Why should Canadians, senior citizens in homes for the elderly, people in hospitals, and ordinary Canadians be subjected to this product that the Armed Forces rejected and that, in the minds of many Canadians today, poses a problem for their health and safety?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker—

An Hon. Member: Oh, here comes Erik!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: It always amazes me when a question is asked that sometimes people choose, for some reason I don't understand, not to listen to the answer.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister has explained, there was never any question as to health and safety involved in the product. Indeed, the Department did have a shipment and went to the trouble to obtain a reassessment, a re-examination in a laboratory environment. That laboratory examination certified that the product was completely free of any health or safety hazard.

REQUEST FOR DISMISSAL OF MINISTER

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister once again. The Prime Minister will know that several years ago the Canadian salmon pack was quarantined because of a hint of improper inspection of our fish products for our export markets. That is worth \$1.7 billion a year with a half a billion—

Mr. Speaker: Does the Hon. Member have a question?

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries has jeopardized that. Will the Prime Minister do the correct thing and dismiss the Minister of Fisheries forthwith?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I think I have already indicated my view of the role played by the Minister of Fisheries. The evidence is clear cut and I think it would be unfair of my hon. friend to take that attitude, given the assurances given by the Minister—

Ms. Copps: Would you feed it to your family?

Mr. Mulroney:—and other colleagues, and his Department, to the effect that there was no evidence of any kind of any threat to health and safety.

Nobody in his right mind would wish for an incident that would cause even the possibility of a threat to anybody's well-being, or anything that might diminish even in such a tiny manner the reputation for quality that our products have abroad.

It does happen; we have taken the appropriate action. I am informed that it cannot occur again and that what we should be doing is exercise vigilance but also be proud of the products of the Canadian fishery.

[Translation]

INQUIRY WHETHER GOVERNMENT INFORMED ABOUT TAINTED FISH

Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel-Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. This morning, the Minister said, and I quote:

[English]

I think the consumer should be prudent, the consumer should check the smell and colour of the tuna. When a fish is improper for consumption I think we can smell it.