

Oral Questions

The Minister has mentioned that tests were made for PSP, paralytic shellfish poisoning. The fact remains that rats and mice died on Friday both in Ottawa and in Black's Harbour, New Brunswick. Those are the facts and I will stick with them if the Minister will stick with the facts.

If mice and rats were dying does the Minister not think that the product which was killing those mice and rats should not have been available to human beings?

● (1440)

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I will explain to the hon. gentleman. First, I said that we were testing for PSP. As a former Fisheries Minister, he would understand that.

Second, he would understand that most scientists will say that mice will die within a 20-minute period with the symptoms and development of PSP. The mice in question died between two and three hours, so that it was not indicative of PSP. I have said that all along. I am not giving any new facts. That has been common knowledge.

The Hon. Member should change his question somewhat because I am sure he did not phrase in that way purposely. The number of mice that were tested and the number that died additionally concern a second piece of scientific information. A small ratio of the mice in fact died, which again is different from any traditional type of PSP testing. Obviously, the investigation had to go from there.

We still do not have that toxin isolated. As a former Fisheries Minister he should look at what happened in Denmark, Sweden, and Japan. I refer him to what health experts clearly said in terms of the speed with which the Department acted.

Mr. Henderson: Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about PSP. Obviously that was ruled out as a possibility. I am talking about a substance, regardless of what it is, that killed mice and rats and obviously was harmful for human consumption.

AVAILABILITY OF SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Health and Welfare has ruined the mussel industry in Atlantic Canada by his inaction.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Henderson: What new evidence was obtained by the Department between 10 a.m. on Sunday morning, when mussel exporters were stopped from exporting mussels off Prince Edward Island, and 6.45 on Tuesday evening, that would make the Minister decide that an all-out alert would be posted for consumers of mussels in Canada that would not have been the same evidence which produced the stop order on shipment of mussels at ten o'clock on Sunday? What new evidence?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I can answer that as well. I say to the Hon. Member that he cannot have it both ways. Like the action on the 2,600 cases that I mentioned to him, if I stopped the industry every time there was a first indication of any complaint he would be after me immediately, saying that I killed the industry. Now he wants to work it the other way, but he cannot have it both ways.

Some Hon. Members: Answer the question.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): I will return to the details for which he asked. The times that he gave are accurate and are exactly the times that I have given. It was during that period when additional samples were tested and those were the details I gave in the House yesterday. Clearly, once the medical link was established, without identifying the toxin, the decision was taken.

* * *

[Translation]

TRADE

FREE TRADE—ELIMINATION OF MARINE TRANSPORT SECTOR—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Could the Prime Minister explain to the House and to the Canadian people why the Government has agreed to eliminate maritime shipping from its trade agreement?

[English]

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member is anticipating the final report. I would urge him to wait until he sees the final report before commenting on any details.

SITUATION OF SHIPPING INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. What can he tell the shipping industry and the shipbuilders of this country who have been expecting to achieve something against the discriminatory pressures of American law, particularly under the Jones Act provisions, which will force the import into Canada of Alaskan crude oil in Canadian tankers? What has he to say to the comfort of the maritime industries of Canada, given the failure in the face of the American shipping lobby?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I would give them the same advice, which is to wait and read the final report.