

Oral Questions

ined, or if changes in the monitoring and changes in the regulation should be put into effect.

Surely, at the moment, since the hon. member has been clamouring for an independent investigation of this issue, he would not want to prejudge or paralyse further the work of the panel of reputable scientists who are looking into this matter. The scientists on this panel are not governmental people.

POSSIBLE DANGER TO HUMAN LIFE

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, this is the most serious issue facing us here in this House at this point in time.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Fulton: According to the minister's own officials, human life is being endangered by this measure. They have said:

The heavy metals associated with the tailings discharge will result in the elevation of heavy metal levels in sediment, algae, invertebrates, and fish within Alice Arm, possibly to levels which exceed the recommended maximum for human consumption.

Is the minister telling us that we should allow dumping to commence and accept a sort of tinkering form of review over the next couple of months when human life is in danger? Let us see some guts. Let us see him call for a moratorium, in this House, today, before they start dumping.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): It is obvious that the hon. member has decided that he will gain footage out of this issue.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. LeBlanc: The fact of the matter is that for weeks now the hon. member has stood in this House and used words like "toxic", "poison", and a great many scare words to create headlines. I am sorry if I have to disappoint him. By the way, Madam Speaker, he quotes from reports which are not identified. At no place, in any of the documents that I have seen, was there any indication of danger to human life or human health.

● (1430)

An hon. Member: It's in your own report!

Mr. LeBlanc: If the hon. member has any evidence to this effect, besides selective quotes, I wish he would make it available to me.

INFORMATION GIVEN TO MINISTER

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): As you know, in reply to my question a couple of weeks ago, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said that:

The reality is that I have looked in the records to see if there was unusual haste—I have no evidence of this at all.

He went on to say:

It was made very clear when the permit was issued and the order in council was passed, that on judgment of the scientists who had reviewed this situation they felt this type of tailings deposit was acceptable.

When the minister gave that answer in the House of Commons, had he seen or been informed of the communication from Mr. Trethewey to Mr. R. Hoos, dated December 11, 1978, which talked about the process and the task force report as being against the final recommendation, including the use of the words "unilaterally prepared", "without approval"—that is, of the task force, and—"did not reflect the majority of the task force"—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Fraser: My question, given all that, in view of the fact that in addition Mr. Trethewey's statement said that there were—

Some hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Fraser: —levels which would exceed the recommended maximum for humans—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows that he should not use long quotations in a question, and I would ask him to proceed to a question now. Otherwise, I will have to recognize another member.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Did the minister know about this document when he gave the answers to me in the House a few weeks ago? If he did know about it, how can he continue to say that all the scientific evidence showed that it was acceptable to proceed?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I did not know the details of these conversations which had taken place in what I call the first level of interdepartmental discussion, any more than the hon. member knew, when he was minister of the environment and he wrote a letter of congratulations to the Amax company wishing them well in their new project. He did not know, and I did not know what had been the discussions at the working level of departmental officials, the interdepartmental committee. That information would then be passed on to the next level, and then finally to those who have to make clear recommendations in the region. I did not know what those details were. I have been apprised of those in the last few days, and I am looking into this right now.

Mr. Fraser: In reply to the minister, if I made a mistake, I admitted it. The minister has made a mistake, and does not admit it but compounds it by continuing without a public hearing.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!