

Mr. Fraser: The Right Hon. Member knows full well that there is not a tittle of evidence anywhere that any of this product is a threat or a danger to the health of Canadians. I would hope that the Right Hon. Member and other Hon. Members here would accept my word on this.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Fraser: If you do not accept my word, then take the word of my own scientists from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans who tested the product in laboratories, and the word of the two independent panels. Both reports make it quite clear that there is no question of danger to health from these products whatsoever.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

REPUTATION OF FISHING INDUSTRY—REQUEST FOR PRODUCTION OF REPORTS

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, due to a serious error of judgment by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, thousands of jobs are now in jeopardy. Why has the Minister placed the reputation of the Canadian fishing industry in jeopardy? What is the Minister going to do to save those jobs now in jeopardy? Will the Minister produce the reports that he talks about that okayed this product?

Hon. John A. Fraser (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman, who is the critic for fisheries matters in the Official Opposition, has been a Fisheries Minister. I know that he will speak to the right hon. gentleman who leads his Party, and remind him of the necessity of not making allegations that affect the health of Canadians when those allegations are groundless.

Ms. Copps: Fraser speaks.

An Hon. Member: Table the reports.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fraser: Requests have been made of me by the media for these reports. My response has been that if the company involved is prepared to release them, I am.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Copps: You are a dead fish.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suspect this will be a difficult day, and I would ask for calm, please.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I view this as a serious matter because of the irresponsible allegations being made. I would think Hon. Members would listen.

I cannot release those documents right now and I will tell you why. There is an application by a media outlet under the Access to Information Act. That is being challenged by the company. Until that hearing on whether or not these documents should be released, which the Department of Fisheries

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and Oceans on my instructions has said we will release, is completed, I cannot in law release these documents.

Mr. Nunziata: It is your public duty.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Fraser: It is one thing to ask me to release something, but when the law says that I cannot release the documents yet, Hon. Members have to accept that. These documents, I am satisfied, will eventually be released. We are taking the position in the courts that they should be.

FISH INSPECTION STANDARDS

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, as a former Minister I must say I have never made a decision that has affected so many lives as the decision which this Minister just made.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Henderson: Never, Mr. Speaker, in Canadian history has a Minister of Fisheries overruled his own experts on a matter of health. I want him to know that.

Do we have any standards for fish inspection in this country, or do standards change from day to day on the basis of political interference?

Hon. John A. Fraser (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member persists in saying that this is a question of health. I have repeatedly said that it is not. The Hon. Member ought to be prepared to accept that. With respect to standards, one of the independent panels, which I appointed, commented that the guidelines were too vague. As a consequence, in June I invited industry to join with officials in my Department to revise the guidelines, which was done. I did not revise them; industry revised them.

● (1425)

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: That is good news!

Mr. Riis: That is okay, John!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Fraser: I am sure that all Hon. Members will realize that an industry which has to compete will not come up with unsatisfactory guidelines.

The Hon. Member said that never before has a Fisheries Minister overruled his officials on a matter of health. I categorically deny that I would, or did any such thing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!