

Oral Questions

On what basis would the Minister make such a statement to this House, and then yesterday issue a press release indicating that this S-Area is somewhat of a new and pressing problem which should be eradicated almost immediately? This is also in view of the answer he has just given, since he has had knowledge of it for some considerable length of time.

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, I would have to check exactly what I did reply to the Hon. Member but, as far as I can recall, the answer I gave him then is still accurate. There is no evidence whatsoever that the standards of drinking water in the Niagara River or Lake Ontario are beyond those which are established as being safe. There is no indication in the present situation of any conflict with the existing safe water guidelines. That does not mean we should not be concerned about leakages or the migration of fill. There are problems which should concern us. The question the Hon. Member posed, if I remember correctly, was in terms of safety levels, and I think the answer I gave to him is one which I would repeat now.

● (1500)

REASONS FOR MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister who said that the information he received from his officials was that there was no danger to quality supply in this situation. If he is not serious about the problem why did he make this expression yesterday in his press release? If he is serious, then why did he say that he would simply express his concerns to American authorities so that they, in turn, will keep his concerns in mind when they negotiate a settlement with the contaminators, knowing full well that we have had little benefit from U.S. actions in the past?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, that is not what I said yesterday. We indicated that not only are we going to continue our representations to the American authorities in a diplomatic way, as we have in the past, but we are going to continue to deal with the International Joint Commission on these affairs. We are using the Niagara Toxics Committee and the consultation committee to bring our concerns to the attention of the United States. We are increasing our own spending in terms of the Departments of Environment, in terms of Health and Welfare, and in terms of fisheries and Oceans to examine the problem. What is new in this situation is not changes in the quality of water; what is new is the evidence of migration, underground, of potentially dangerous products to Canadian territory. That is the new element of the situation which I discussed yesterday. I brought forward an action program which will help us deal with that.

PETITION

TABLING OF REPORTS OF CLERK OF PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the Table reports of the Clerk of Petitions stating that he has examined the petitions presented by Hon. Members on Monday, January 24, 1983 and finds that they meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

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PRIVILEGE

MR. ROBINSON (BURNABY)—PRESENCE OF PHOTOGRAPHERS IN CHAMBER

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege following certain events which took place during Question Period. It is my understanding that recently photographers were allowed into the House of Commons for the purpose of taking pictures of what takes place on the floor of the House. It is my understanding that photographers are restricted to taking pictures for that purpose.

Today, a group of young Canadians individually voiced their anger and outrage over Canada's complicity in the testing of the Cruise missile. Following that peaceful protest, which I at least, as an individual Member, support—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Robinson (Burnaby): —the photographer turned his camera up to the gallery and started to take pictures of members of the public in the gallery. I would ask—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Of course, the Hon. Member knows that this is not a question of privilege; it is a matter of the administration of the affairs of the House of Commons. I can assure the Hon. Member that if he is right in saying that the camera was turned toward the galleries and such photographs are published, then as Speaker I will make any disposition that may be required. The photographers are sufficiently warned of their latitude in the House. Until now they have adhered strictly to the rules we have set down for them.

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POINT OF ORDER

MR. FLIS—INTERRUPTION OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jesse P. Flis (Parkdale-High Park): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that the proceedings of this House were interrupted during Question Period today. I think it is more unfortunate that one Party in this House applauded this kind of disruption.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Which Party?