

Oral Questions

REQUEST FOR REMOVAL OF ALL CANS OF TAINTED TUNA

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, it is two cans for today, but we do not know what the future is going to be.

What steps is the Minister going to take this afternoon to ensure that every can of tainted tuna is off the shelf? In addition, what procedures will be tightened up within the Health Protection Branch to ensure that cans are not missed in some other future recall?

● (1420)

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, it is tight. We have been devoting the amount of person-years and the amount of money to that issue which I just outlined to the Hon. Member. He is a reasonable person. We have now found two additional cans in a recall of over 800,000 in the Canadian retail system. I think even he would admit that that is a pretty good system. We are continuing to monitor it. As I said yesterday, as the Prime Minister said, and as I said in September, we are not overlooking any effort which is physically possible for us as a Department to make sure that none of that tuna is on the shelves in Canada.

RANDOM INSPECTION PROCESS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. When we questioned yesterday about the most recent discovery of rancid tuna, the Minister in reply seemed to suggest wrongdoing by the former Government when he stressed that this particular batch had not even been inspected. Of course the Minister knows and acknowledged outside the House that the random process of inspection was not only conducted by the previous Government but is still ongoing. Considering that it is possible by this method of inspection to miss a whole lot of tuna, a considerable lot, without it being inspected at all, will the Government now tighten up the process to make sure all the tuna is inspected?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might answer the question asked by the Hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party. I will be announcing this afternoon a significant tightening up of the sampling procedure. I have ordered the meticulous examination of all canned tuna products produced in Canada on shelves in Canadian stores, by a rigorous sampling process. I have instructed my officials to implement immediately new inspection procedures ensuring that samples are drawn and analysed from every production lot of canned tuna at the plant of origin.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be able to hear this today. It is just unfortunate that the

people of Canada did not have this process already in effect; perhaps we would not have had this problem. Since the Minister said that he would make an announcement later today, does he plan to make it outside the House, or will he show respect for the institution of Parliament and the questions raised in the House by making his announcement here in the House of Commons?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I have just indicated to the House some of the procedures which will be followed. If the Hon. Leader of the NDP cares to ask more questions, I will elaborate.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

REQUEST THAT MINISTER MAKE STATEMENT IN HOUSE

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I would like to shift the question away from the Minister, because we do not want to go through the whole process that we had on the de Havilland deal. It was like trying to pull teeth to find out information. I ask the House Leader or the Deputy Prime Minister whether they will take steps to ensure that the statement, to which the Minister just alluded, will be made later today in the House of Commons instead of outside the House.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I am certain that the Minister will be prepared to table his statement just as soon as he has it completed, later today.

PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, we witnessed public outrage earlier this year when a Minister of the Government intervened to lower fish inspection standards, which caused tainted fish to be sold in stores across the country. The Government has had time to plug the holes, but now we discover that it has not. My question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Why has the Government not been able to protect the public against unacceptable food products?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, what we have is an inspection procedure which was put in by the Liberal Party and followed throughout the entire Trudeau years. The Minister of Fisheries has said today that he is going to tighten it even further. What I am saying to him—and it goes back to what happened yesterday—is that that tuna was canned when his Leader was Prime Minister of Canada. That is what he should remember.

● (1425)

NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my supplementary question will answer the first question better than the Minister did. Will the Minister confirm the