

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Epp: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same minister. He did not answer either one of the questions I asked him, but he said that the British Parliament indicated that it would act according to precedents and that it would not change its policy. If that is the case, I should like to ask him about stated policy.

During his meetings with the British ministers, did any British minister repeat to the Minister of Justice, in any form of words, the substance of the warning of November 10 of the then House leader, St. John Stevas, when he said, expressing British government policy, the "British Parliament could not act if any challenge before the Supreme Court of Canada"?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Madam Speaker, the answer to the hon. member will be very well known, because I hope that the British government will table very soon its reply to the Kershaw report. Personally I am convinced it will act in accordance with the word of Mrs. Thatcher and rapidly dispose of the resolution in light of the precedents and the law.

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[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ALICE ARM, B.C.—DUMPING OF TAILINGS BY AMAX—REQUEST FOR REVOCATION OF ORDER IN COUNCIL

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He has risen in the House on a considerable number of occasions and indicated that his scientists have always supported the idea of the special order in council for the dumping of mine tailings at Alice Arm by Amax. On October 31, 1980, he said in the House:

—the officials in the Pacific region did make a review as I requested. They have now made it clear that nothing has emerged from their re-examination to lead them to change the recommendations they had made and which were eventually put into the order in council which was passed.

However, a member of the task force which looked into the dumping at Alice Arm said the following:

In the present situation, the records will show that the JDCC approved the task force recommendations. This, of course, is false.

In the same letter, the minister's own scientific team rejected the project in 1978, for the following reasons: "The heavy metals associated with the tailings—"

● (1425)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The quotations the hon. member is reading are quite long for the question. Could the hon. member proceed to his question?

Mr. Fulton: In view of the fact, Madam Speaker, that the minister has stood in the House a number of times and said that his scientific team has always said that this project was fine and that there were no problems, will the minister rise in

his place and tell us on what scientific data he bases that? In light of this information will the minister revoke the special order in council?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I did say some months ago, when the question arose, that I was asking my department to review this matter, which it did. They said that there was no new evidence to change the recommendation which had been made to approve, by order in council, the regulations which were put into effect.

At what I would call the first level of expertise, an inter-departmental committee did examine this question. There were conflicting views. The next level of authority in the department came to the conclusion that this was a desirable approach, on the opinion of an outstanding scientist dealing with the problems of marine dumping. Following normal departmental procedure, the recommendation was to the effect that permission should be granted. This is the recommendation upon which I acted.

As I said, there was a difference of opinion at the primary level of discussions between officials of different departments. I have asked that this be reviewed to ensure that the divergent opinions had been transmitted as the subject moved up through the various levels. I have not yet received information on this matter.

CALL FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, this matter has been raging in the House of Commons for a year now. Of the original task force four of the five scientists, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the oceanographic people, and the minister's own Department of Fisheries and Oceans are opposed to this project. In light of Mr. Trethewey's letter, which describes the joint committee report as being highly irregular and completely unacceptable, would the minister tell us why he will not place a moratorium on the project, revoke the special order in council and call for a public inquiry, since there are only two days left until the dumping begins?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, a week ago, after a considerable delay, partly due to the worries and fears which the hon. member has been spreading—

An hon. Member: Sit down!

Mr. LeBlanc: Finally, a panel of reputable scientists got to work. They are examining the data which was provided when the decision was made, and when the recommendation of the first level of scientists was overruled by the next level. This is not an unusual procedure on a highly technical and complex scientific matter. The panel will indicate to us if the procedures were correct, if the scientific data was properly exam-