

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Henderson: —concerning who actually ordered the tuna off the shelves and when the Prime Minister first learned of this tuna story.

Is this resignation an attempt by you, Sir, Mr. Prime Minister, to use the Minister of Fisheries—

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: I will invite the Member to rephrase his question, perhaps through the Chair. We are developing a habit that I need to stop. I think the Member understands.

Mr. Henderson: I will direct my question through you, Sir.

An Hon. Member: Be a gentleman.

Mr. Henderson: In the Prime Minister's attempt to use the Minister of Fisheries as a scapegoat, is the Prime Minister attempting to use the Minister of Fisheries as his scapegoat for his own negligence?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deans: How can he answer instead of the person asked?

Mr. Nielsen: —on behalf of the Government, and as Deputy Prime Minister, I can tell the Hon. Member and the House that the Government was seized of this matter last Wednesday and acted at once to address it.

Mr. Deans: This is offensive.

Mr. Riis: What is wrong with the Prime Minister?

Mr. Nielsen: The Minister of Fisheries has acted in accordance with the most honourable traditions of this House.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Riis: The Prime Minister is a big boy.

Mr. Deans: This is offensive.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gauthier: Is the Prime Minister resigning too?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nielsen: I was going to say, Mr. Speaker, if opposition Members have the slightest appreciation of the function of Government, they would realize that the Deputy Prime Minister, acting on his responsibilities from time to time on instructions of the Prime Minister, acts in matters—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deans: He answers the questions while the Prime Minister is sitting there.

Mr. Nielsen: I have told Hon. Members that I acted on those instructions on behalf of the Government, and the Government acted immediately as a result of the inquiries that I conducted on his instructions.

Mr. Deans: That is unbelievable.

* * *

FINANCE

VALUE OF UNITED STATES DOLLAR

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. As brave and serious the resignation of the former Minister, I think all Canadians are also deeply concerned about decisions taken this weekend by the Finance officials and Ministers of five other countries which go to the very fundamental ability of our country to be competitive internationally and to run a proper economy.

In light of the so-called relationship and the tremendous importance of our trading relationship with the United States, can the Prime Minister tell us were we, in any way, informed by the United States Government about its intentions to hold these meetings and to make these decisions that go to the very heart of our trading relationship?

Will the Minister of Finance or some other official of the Government be in immediate touch with the Government in Washington to find out what impact it will have upon Canada?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member—

Mr. Riis: Here goes another billion.

An Hon. Member: Billion dollar Barbara.

Mrs. McDougall: —should know that the meetings which took place this weekend of the Group of Five are part of a regular series of meetings which normally take place before the International Monetary Fund meets as it is doing early next month in Seoul. The fact that this meeting has achieved a somewhat higher profile does not in any way indicate that our relationship with the United States has deteriorated; in fact it has been enhanced.

● (1420)

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, in the last few weeks we have seen that this Minister is capable of turning logic on its head. How can she explain the fact that a major decision to devalue the American dollar, which affects every one of our industries and regions, was taken without any consultation with this country, without information being given to us and without any invitation to participate? She says that that is an enhanced relationship. Would she please explain that to the Canadian people?