

Oral Questions

● (1415)

HOUSE OF COMMONSPRESENCE IN GALLERY OF UNITED KINGDOM MINISTER OF
STATE FOR IMMIGRATION

Mr. Speaker: May I draw to the attention of Members the presence in our gallery of the Hon. David Waddington, Minister of State responsible for Immigration, of the United Kingdom.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF DELEGATION FROM DENMARK LED
BY MINISTER FOR TAXATION

Mr. Speaker: I also draw attention of Members to the presence in the gallery of a delegation from Denmark, led by the Hon. Isi Foighel, Minister for Taxation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FISHERIES

SALE OF CANNED TUNA—MINISTER'S RULING

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, nothing is more important to Canadians than the health of our families and our children, and nothing is more important to our fisheries than a world-wide reputation for good quality and performance.

The Minister of Fisheries overruled his own inspectors, his own health experts, and an independent review board, and allowed rotten tuna from the Star-Kist fish packing plant in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, to be sold to Canadians. Why is the Minister of Fisheries playing with the health of Canadians in this way? Why is he risking the world-wide reputation of our fisheries industry? Why did he allow the sale of one million tins of rancid and decomposing tuna to Canadian consumers? Give us the reason for this.

Hon. John A. Fraser (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): First, Mr. Speaker, the allegations by the right hon. gentleman of course are not true. He suggested that health is an important matter, as well as reputation. Through you, Mr. Speaker, may I advise the House that at no time, under any circumstances, was there any suggestion, or any finding, or any allegation, or accusation that there was any threat to health with respect to a certain tuna product from a certain plant in New Brunswick.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

TUNA UNFIT FOR CONSUMPTION—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, David MacDonald, the co-ordinator of Canadian relief operations in Ethiopia, refused, and rightly so, a shipment of rotting tuna destined for Ethiopia. Why is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans letting Canadians buy and eat tuna he quite rightly decided not to ship to famine-stricken populations? Does the health of Canadian families mean nothing to the Minister? Is he going to have this spoiled tuna taken off supermarket shelves immediately?

[English]

Hon. John A. Fraser (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that there was and is not any health threat from any tuna that has been or is being manufactured or produced in Canada. I want that clearly understood.

It is entirely irresponsible for Members of Parliament to proceed with those allegations, in spite of the fact that their mentor is Eric Malling of the CBC.

I am sure that the Right Hon. Member would want to know that in determining this matter I obtained two independent reports; one from the Research Productivity Council in New Brunswick—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: Hatfield's hacks.

Mr. Fraser: Then I set up an independent panel that was appointed by this Department. That independent panel's report approved the sale of the product outside Canada.

REQUEST THAT PRODUCT BE REMOVED FROM STORES

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, apparently the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has advised Canadians to open the tins first before eating them—but I want to say to the Minister—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gauthier: Good idea.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Let me tell the Minister to get that rotten tuna off Canadian shelves. You knuckled under to Premier Hatfield. You put politics before health in this country. Do something about it.

● (1420)

Hon. John A. Fraser (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Right Hon. Member knows that it is best to open the tin before eating the contents. But what the Right Hon. Member does not know is that it is best to think before opening your mouth.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!