

*Adjournment Debate*

Star-Kist affair but what he did not survive was the enormous contradiction that he had set up between himself and the Prime Minister. When the former Minister subsequently tried to heal the problem, the Prime Minister sacked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

● (1820)

To return to the question at hand, there seems to be information indicating that the Prime Minister would have had several matters before him. First, David MacDonald publicly rejected this product weeks if not months before. On July 5, a close friend of the Prime Minister seems to have been given information that this scandal was upon us. On July 28, Ian Anderson who is now Deputy Principal Secretary, allegedly heard of this matter from two offices of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I believe tonight's answer will reveal that Mr. Anderson had a lot more information of which he either advised or failed to advise the Prime Minister.

The Department of National Defence had the information. Why did the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) not have the information? The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) should have had the information. Justice and Fisheries informed the Prime Minister's Office that this matter was pending. It is absolutely unthinkable that the Prime Minister of Canada would not have been briefed about the possible impact on a \$2-billion industry and 100,000 jobs and the possibility of health problems arising from having a million cans of rancid and decomposing tuna at loose in the country.

It is amazing that we have been led to believe by the Prime Minister that none of his staff members and none of the Ministers briefed him on this critical matter and that he had to see it on television after which he knew that the right thing to do was to get that stuff off the shelves. It is pretty damned obvious that it should not have been on the shelves in the first place.

Only a few things make sense to Members of the House of Commons and the people of Canada. We have to make the assumption that the Prime Minister's staff has some common sense and fulfils the responsibility of briefing the Prime Minister on matters that are important to this nation. If we do not believe that, we have to believe that his staff is incompetent and the Prime Minister knew nothing. We have to believe that he gets his information about the nation's business from television.

Tonight we may see a clarification of this matter when it will allegedly be aired on television that information of this nature was in fact given to Mr. Ian Anderson, now Deputy Principal Secretary. One would think that he would have informed the Prime Minister of a very serious matter affecting a \$2-billion Canadian fishing industry, a \$1.7-billion exporting industry, 100,000 jobs and relating to the releasing on the Canadian market of a million cans of rancid and decomposing tuna. There is no way that we can accept the story that Mr. Anderson had not informed the Prime Minister of that. If that is in fact the case, the Prime Minister should have his head

first thing tomorrow morning and be prepared to make a statement in the House of Commons about the reorganization of the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office so that this country can run with some effectiveness and safety, something which has not been demonstrated by the Prime Minister to date. Other than that, the Prime Minister should stand up in the House and admit that he in fact knew about this issue weeks before, as the former Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, a man whom many people know to be an honest gentleman with a tremendous political conscience, stated unequivocally in the period before the scrum on Friday.

● (1825)

The questions which have been asked in the House are still wide open. The people of Canada have not been given an acceptable answer by the Prime Minister. The questioning will have to continue until the Prime Minister comes clean with us and tells us that, in fact, he has either reorganized his office and fired the people responsible, or until he comes clean with us and tells us that he did know long before and failed to act. Ultimately, we might see that it is the Prime Minister who puts up his damn seat in response to this very serious matter.

**Mr. Mel Gass (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to respond to the original question asked by the Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River (Mr. Skelly) which was the basis for the Minister's ruling. My statement today is intended to set out clearly the decisions taken by the former Minister with respect to the release of certain lots of tuna products.

Over a period of months, beginning in late 1984, selected lots of canned tuna production inspected by DFO Inspection were detained from release to the public because of inspection decisions that these lots did not meet the minimum quality standards set out under the Fish Inspection Regulations. It must be stressed that large quantities of Star-Kist production did pass inspection testing throughout this period and were distributed to the market-place in the normal manner. It must also be stressed, and underlined, that at no time were any doubts expressed about the health or safety attributes of any Star-Kist products, including the detained products.

Beginning in late 1984, the Star-Kist Company, the Hon. Member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain), and other interested persons approached the former Minister with criticisms of the quality standards applied by Fisheries inspectors to tuna production. He personally met with representatives of Star-Kist at St. Andrews at that time to see for himself what problems existed and how these could be corrected. In January 1985 the Government of New Brunswick contracted the Research and Productivity Council to conduct an independent assessment of Star-Kist production methods and issues of difference between the company and Inspection. Departmental staff co-operated with this RPC study. A report from RPC was presented to the New Brunswick Government on February 11, 1985, with a copy being provided to the former Minister.

Following receipt of the RPC report of February 11, the former Minister instructed that sampled of detained Star-Kist