

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Hon. John A. Fraser (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the assumptions upon which the Hon. Member's questions are based are just not correct. The stock in question was recommended for sale outside Canada by one of the independent committees.

FISHERIES ACT—REFERENCE TO "TAINTED OR RANCID FISH"

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has some trouble with the definition of "unfit for human consumption and health". The Fisheries Act states in these words: "No one shall sell tainted fish or rancid fish". Is that no longer a requirement?

Hon. John A. Fraser (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, if the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition would get his legal research work done adequately, he would know that the words to which he referred are set out in certain guidelines. The question at issue was whether or not the objective or subjective application of judgment by the inspectors was adequate or inappropriate. That was the matter which was being appealed. It had nothing to do with health whatsoever.

I want to just remind Hon. Members that in this country when we have a Department of Fisheries and Oceans, which literally has the power of economic life and death over the people who are governed by its regulations, if a citizen cannot come to the Minister to get an independent assessment of something with which he quarrels with the Department, the citizen has no appeal at all. And you would transfer any independent assessment, any independent appeal, to the very people who rejected the product in the first place.

Ms. Copps: Rancid is rancid.

Mr. Fraser: I am sure that that would not fit well in the areas you come from, if you are talking to your own processors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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TRANSPORTATION OF DANGEROUS GOODS

REQUEST THAT LEGISLATION BE STRENGTHENED

Mr. Bill Attewell (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. While many Canadians are concerned about the transport by rail of dangerous goods such as toxic and explosive chemicals, in some circles there is more concern about the transport by trucks of dangerous goods. Since the provincial Governments are quite involved in some aspects of transport by trucks, could the Minister clarify for us where we stand on this very important piece of legislation which appears to need strengthening?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, on July 1 broad regulations covering the transportation of dangerous goods were promulgated. These regulations apply to all modes of transportation. In the case of provinces, Ontario specifically agreed and became a party to those regulations, which means that transportation by truck both interprovincially and intraprovincially is covered by the Dangerous Goods Act and by the regulations which were promulgated on July 1.

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BANKS AND BANKING

CANADIAN COMMERCIAL BANK COLLAPSE—AUDITING OF LOAN PORTFOLIO

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri-Westmount): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of State for Finance have told us repeatedly that they relied upon the best available evidence before agreeing to a support package back in March which will probably now cost Canadian taxpayers about \$1 billion.

Why did the Minister of Finance or the Minister of State for Finance refuse to accept an offer from the major banks to conduct a quick special audit which would have determined the value of the loan portfolio upon which the whole support package depended?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, we have said repeatedly in this House that we consulted with the banks, that the banks had some input into the decision which was made, that they had some right of examination, that the Inspector General had the right of examination, and that the combined decision—combined decision—was based on the impact that this bank could have on our system. And I am looking forward to discussing this further in committee.

OFFER MADE BY CHARTERED BANKS

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri-Westmount): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of State for Finance deny that an offer was made by several of the chartered banks to conduct a quick special audit in order to determine the value of those assets, that that offer was made and refused?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State ((Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I have denied none of the events which are related to any of the activities surrounding this decision. This was a collective decision. It was made on behalf of the banking system in Canada, it was made on behalf of the Canadian dollar, it was made on behalf of the Canadian people, it was made on behalf of the Alberta economy, and the banks participated in making that decision.

Mr. Johnston: Yes or no?