

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am saying no such thing. I am saying that the matter was raised—

Mr. Gauthier: That is exactly what you are saying.

Mr. Broadbent: That is exactly what you are saying.

Some Hon. Members: What are you saying?

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I have been asked a question; I think I am tempted to try to answer it. I am saying no such thing. I am saying that in both instances involving staff members this summer, this question was not raised. In the first instance it was raised by Mr. MacAdam who communicated himself with the Fisheries Department. In the second case the matter was placed in an entirely different perspective for Mr. Anderson. In fact the query related to an interview which the Minister had given on June 26. The Minister being out of town, they sought advice as to how they ought to respond in the event that it aired that evening.

With regard to the product being unfit for human consumption, when that was brought to my attention—all I can do is tell my hon. friend what transpired—I immediately communicated with the Deputy Prime Minister and caused him to convene a meeting of the Minister of Health and the former Minister of Fisheries, plus other senior officials of the Government, so that they could find a way to remove this product from the shelves immediately. That is exactly what I did.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, as I understand the facts, by mid-summer the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of Justice, to name three, were all aware because of tests that had been conducted or because of impending legal action, as was the case with the Ministry of Justice, that tuna, unfit for human consumption, was on the shelves of stores throughout Canada.

Is the Government so incompetent that the knowledge of that in a number of Ministries was not brought to the attention of the Minister or the Prime Minister? Is that the kind of incompetence we have in the country?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have the kind of competence which indicates that when this matter is brought to the attention of the Prime Minister of Canada, he immediately acts on behalf of the consumers and the citizens of the country. That is what happened.

ISSUANCE OF FORMER MINISTER'S STATEMENT

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's answers would indicate that he believes he is the only competent person in Cabinet. It is interesting to note and tragic to realize that the Prime Minister defended the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans when the Minister's actions threatened the public good. However, he

swiftly canned that same Minister when the Minister's actions threatened the Prime Minister personally; suddenly this tuna was not good enough.

I have a direct question for the Prime Minister. Is it not true that the Prime Minister instructed his Minister of Fisheries to issue a clarifying statement last Friday night after the Minister had publicly disagreed with the Prime Minister's version of events on Friday afternoon? Is it not also true that the Prime Minister only decided to can his Minister of Fisheries after that Minister had publicly corrected the Prime Minister's flawed version of events in respect of the tuna?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no in those cases. The only flaw is in the question, and it is gravely and irretrievably flawed.

OFFICIAL'S DUTY

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, will the Prime Minister tell the House whether or not his assistant, Mr. MacAdam, was aware of this matter because Mr. MacAdam had been lobbied by New Brunswick MPs, in particular the MP in whose riding this plant is located? Is it not normally the duty of the Atlantic assistant of the Prime Minister to report to the Prime Minister when members of his caucus bring matters to his attention?

● (1430)

Is the Prime Minister telling us that Mr. MacAdam did not communicate—

Mr. Speaker: Order. You have already asked two questions.

Mr. Tobin: —did not communicate directly with the Prime Minister?

[Translation]

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I gave a complete answer to that question just a few minutes ago.

[English]

PRIME MINISTER'S INFORMATION

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): We have been told emphatically that the Ministry of Health had this problem, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of National Defence, the Prime Minister's Office had been contacted twice, the Privy Council Office had this matter in detail, and the Prime Minister is attempting to tell this House he knew nothing about it. Is the only time the Prime Minister ever finds out anything when he watches television? Is that the only time he gets information?

Mr. Deans: Sitting in your jacuzzi.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP, having done what they have had to