

Oral Questions

Minister did not personally find out about the illness until Monday, he was negligent. If in fact the Department had known Friday mice were dying, Saturday mice were dying, and Sunday morning the shippers were told to stop shipping, how can the Minister possibly stand in the House and claim that he should not have told consumers until Tuesday night?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, again if you take a look at the chronology which I have here and which I made available yesterday, the Hon. Member persists in saying something that isn't true. She persists in saying that I knew. The answer is that I did not know.

Mr. Gauthier: You should have known.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Surely somebody has to understand what we are dealing with in respect to this issue, that is, that there are food inspectors with Health and Welfare across the country. In terms of illnesses, for example a person accessing a medical clinic in Quebec or Moncton or Prince Edward Island, the Department of Health would not necessarily be notified instantaneously.

For example, a Member of the House could be ill tonight. Surely the Health and Welfare Department would be notified tomorrow morning because of something he might have had for lunch today.

I am just asking Members to think through what they are saying, and what they are saying is that somehow every time the Department of Health and Welfare, with its inspectors across the country, is looking for an issue, immediately I have to put forward a health alert or that immediately I would know, as Minister, of every matter they are inspecting.

The point that I make to the Hon. Member is this. The facts I gave her yesterday were accurate yesterday. Those facts are the same today. I suggest to her, stay with the facts.

[Translation]

QUERY WHY MINISTER DID NOT WARN PUBLIC EARLIER NOT TO EAT MUSSELS

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that on November 25 his Department was aware of problems associated with mussels and that people in Montreal, Moncton and Charlottetown were sick. The fact is that, according to the Minister's own words, the matter was serious enough Saturday morning to ask all companies to stop mussel shipments. On Saturday morning, the moment it became clear that it was serious enough to stop mussel shipments, why did he fail to warn consumers? Being responsible for consumer health, why did he not tell Canadians not to eat mussels?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the answer is the same in both languages. The Member talks about Saturday. Dr. Todd received those

samples from Prince Edward Island at 8.15 p.m. upon which testing began that evening, Saturday. Yet the Member stands up in this House and says somehow that I should have an alert on Saturday.

On Sunday, after the testing through that night—again not fully established as a medical link—the shipments were stopped, an additional medical examination took place, and the alert on Tuesday. I say to the House and to Canadians very clearly that every step was followed by the Department. My Department did everything correctly, and as the Minister I support what the Department did.

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GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE**WEST COAST FISHERY—RULING ON SALMON AND HERRING EXPORTS**

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. There are reports that, in the final text of the trade deal, Atlantic fisheries have the recognized right to require that their fish be processed in Canada before being exported. No such protection exists for Pacific fisheries which have been hit—

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands is taking the lead question for the New Democratic Party. I would think that he is entitled to far more courtesy than has been exhibited so far. The Hon. Member.

Mr. Manly: No such protection exists for Pacific fisheries which have been hit by a GATT ruling which discriminates against Canada and prohibits us from having restrictions on the export of unprocessed salmon or herring, Mr. Speaker.

Why didn't the Government insist on the same protection for Pacific fisheries as it did for Atlantic fisheries? Why didn't it protect 6,000 shoreworkers' jobs in British Columbia?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member should know that the West Coast salmon and herring problem is not related to the free trade agreement. As the Member points out himself, it is involved in the recent GATT panel report which finds our measures inconsistent with the GATT provisions.

Therefore, the solution to that problem must be found within the context of the GATT itself. That is what my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, and myself are pursuing.

THREAT TO JOBS OF WORKERS

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He knows that when this issue was first raised two years ago he said on Prince Rupert radio that this