

*Oral Questions*

ance there was no health threat of any kind, and secondly, that the Minister was acting entirely within his authority as a Minister and that there was nothing improper about the situation.

Since the Minister was absent, Mr. Anderson was asked for advice on what to do if the issue was mentioned on the evening news. Mr. Anderson said: Take your most senior official at Fisheries and Oceans and make him fully available to the media, to answer any questions they might have. And that was it. I think my staff acted quickly, in the national interest, and I believe my hon. friend will agree that was the case.

● (1420)

[English]

## REQUEST FOR PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Saint-Maurice):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. According to what we know about the problem, a lot is unknown to the public. Not only one Minister was responsible. The Minister of National Health and Welfare should have been involved, if he was not, and I would say the same about the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Would it be possible for the House to look into the matter to know exactly when the problem became a serious one, who was really at fault, and whether the Prime Minister's Office had any responsibility, rather than avoid the problem as the Prime Minister is doing right now?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I regret that my hon. friend, who asked me a question and gets a direct answer, thinks that it is inadequate and insufficient. I told my hon. friend with regard to my knowledge that it happened on the Tuesday night and that I acted immediately on Wednesday morning at caucus.

**Mr. Lapierre:** At caucus!

**Mr. Mulroney:** That was the first knowledge of it—at caucus on Wednesday morning.

**Mr. Chrétien:** You defended it in the House.

**Mr. Mulroney:** Yes, I think I indicated that in response to a question yesterday.

With regard to my personnel, on or about the first week of July, Mr. MacAdam picked up some scuttle-butt to the effect that there was a story floating around. He, one of my personnel, conveyed it to the Chief of Staff of the Minister of Fisheries, who told him that there was no problem.

About mid-July Mr. Anderson was visited by two members of the personnel of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans who conveyed or gave him the assurance that there was no health hazard, that the Minister was acting within his authority and that there was nothing wrong. They queried, in the absence of the Minister, that if this was aired that night, what advice would he provide? And he said: "My advice to you would be to get the most senior member of the Department of Fisheries

and Oceans and make him available to the media so that he can respond fully to all questions". I think that is sound advice.

## PRODUCT DECLARED UNFIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

**Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the Prime Minister that, when he was answering questions on the first day that the issue broke, he kept using the phrase that there was no health hazard then. He soon realized that tuna fish, unfit for human consumption, ought to be taken off the shelves. It is "unfit for human consumption" which is key here. Since the Prime Minister has used that phrase time after time, is he telling us that in the summer, when we knew that the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of National Defence, as well as Pat MacAdam and Ian Anderson, intimately associated with the Prime Minister, were discussing the matter, no one conveyed the message to any of the Ministers involved or to the Prime Minister himself that the product under discussion—and they well understood it by then—was unfit for human consumption? Did no one know that?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, it was my personnel that brought the scuttle-butt to the attention of the Fisheries officials.

**Some Hon. Members:** What happened?

**Mr. Mulroney:** Mr. MacAdam received the assurance in early July from the Chief of Staff or the official at the Department of Fisheries that indeed he was aware of a possible CTV story but that it caused no concern or problem; that there was no problem. With regard to the substance of the question of my hon. friend as to whether the product was unfit for human consumption, my friend is quite right when he refers to the fact that there was no health and safety warning. When it was brought to my attention that indeed there was an allegation that it was unfit for human consumption, notwithstanding that, I immediately instructed the Deputy Prime Minister to meet with the Minister of Fisheries and the Minister of Health and Welfare and arrange, with their co-operation, to have that product removed from the shelves. That is exactly what transpired.

## OFFICIALS' KNOWLEDGE

**Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa):** Mr. Speaker, I want to know from the Prime Minister—and, more important, the people of Canada want to know—that if we had in this city senior officials who were aware that the tuna was unfit for human consumption, why was it not brought to the attention of the Prime Minister? How could we have a million cans of tuna, unfit for human consumption, out there on the shelves and not have it brought to the attention of the Prime Minister? Is he saying that it would still be on the shelves had the program not appeared on television?