

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the United States Department of Justice is appealing the decision of a California District Court which dealt with the matter only in so far as applications before August 28 were concerned. I understand that that appeal will be heard sometime within the next several days.

In addition to those U.S. court processes, our Ambassador in Washington has raised the matter on several occasions with a range of Ministers in the Government of the United States. It is my intention to raise the matter with Secretary Shultz when I meet with him in Calgary on Monday.

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AGRICULTURE**PRAIRIE FARMERS' DROUGHT LOSSES**

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. He has been the Minister of Agriculture and his Government has been in power now for more than a year, yet farmers in the southern Prairies have been awaiting an answer to their problems with drought and grasshoppers since August, when the Hon. Member for Assiniboia was put in charge of recommendations to the Prime Minister in order to speed up the process.

Since the Minister of Agriculture said that the delays in taking action were somehow related to the wet weather which followed the drought, could he tell us how that improves the financial prospects of farmers in the drought zone? Or was he intimating that the Hon. Member for Assiniboia had been given extra instructions to come up with a payment program for farmers who suffered losses due to extremely bad weather?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am not certain whether I fully understand what information the Hon. Member is seeking. As one who understands some of the problems associated with the agricultural industry, he might have more appreciation for the difficulties we have encountered, for the very reasons which we mentioned. However, I can assure him that we are much closer to a final decision in respect of Phase II. At the same time as reaching a decision on that phase, we are attempting to build into that aspect of the program more long-term, permanent measures to cope with recurring disastrous situations.

ROLE OF PROVINCES

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, has the fact that the provinces have not declared the area a disaster area in any way inhibited the Government from taking action? Or are the allegations circulating out in the country simply allegations and in fact have nothing to do with the slow reaction time of the Government? Does the Minister need the provinces to declare it a disaster area before he can act?

● (1140)

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Hon. Member added that last comment because it makes it much simpler for me to answer. The answer would be no.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**NIAGARA RIVER POLLUTION—UNITED STATES CLEAN-UP PLAN**

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. It has to do with the clean-up plan for the Niagara River presented by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to him. It is a plan that could affect the health of Canadians for generations to come. The Minister makes confusing and conflicting statements inside and outside the House of Commons. Municipalities are becoming nervous and so are non-government groups.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Question, question.

Mr. Caccia: The public wants to know how toxic pollutants will be disposed of, when the clean-up will start, and what kind of funds have been allocated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Will the Minister answer these questions today in the House?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member who posed the question has been making a big point inside and outside the House to the effect that I refuse to release what is a U.S. document which was given to me, in confidence, for my contribution before it is finalized and released by the U.S. Government. It is not my document to release. Having said that, I can reassure him and, through him, the people on whose behalf he purports to be asking the question, that my officials will be linking arms with those of the Governments of Ontario, New York State and the U.S. at a meeting on November 8 to discuss the working document with a view to finalizing it for an early release to the public. The document will be released by the U.S. Government, not by the Canadian Government, because it is not our document.

TOXIC CHEMICAL DUMP SITES

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): It may not be our document but it affects the health of 4.5 million Canadians and the Minister had better learn to give some immediacy to this important matter. I cannot believe that he would take such a detached, cool, and indifferent attitude. He has to give leadership and to tell this House, for instance, whether on November 8—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Order, order.

Mr. Caccia: You shut up over there.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Shameful. Look at Turner smiling.