

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

• (1440)

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena has the floor. The hon. member for Skeena will put his question.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, we know why these guys are at 15 per cent. In a secret memo dated September 11 Justice warns not to make public the use of an Order in Council to avoid a public environmental assessment of the risks of nuclear submarine accidents on the health and property of British Columbians.

Since the minister knows that this abusive cabinet process was found illegal in the Kemano case earlier this year, why has the Minister of the Environment chosen to deny British Columbians the right to publicly assess the nuclear and accident risks of this project?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the hon. member found a decoder ring in his cereal box.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. minister will give his answer.

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister for International Trade indicated that there are ongoing discussions on this issue and that is the case. As we deal with it, we will also deal with the environmental considerations depending on how the issue is presented to us as a government.

* * *

POVERTY

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Today in Canada more than one million children live in poverty. In relation to the top industrialized nations of the world, Canada is next to the bottom of the list in terms of our child poverty rates. Children are our country's future.

Canada's signature on the UN convention on the rights of the child is important, but what is this government doing today to provide the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing to our one million destitute Canadian children?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the statement of my hon. friend is, of course, very misleading. The fact of the matter is—

An hon. member: It is not.

Mr. Mulroney: —very misleading and false, let me add.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mulroney: It is. Of the 187 nations at the United Nations, to suggest that Canadian children rank at the bottom of the heap is a misstatement of fact and my hon. friend knows it. In the interest of honesty, I know that she will want to withdraw that statement. It is not the case.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): She is nodding her approval.

Mr. Mulroney: We have made very serious progress on what is a substantial problem ranging from doubling the child care expense deduction for pre-school children, creating a special initiatives fund and a new supplement to the child tax credit. The child tax credit was increased by 50 per cent starting in 1986. It is prepaid for low income families. Tax discounting has been curbed. The GST tax credit includes a benefit for up to \$100 per child. The government launched initiatives to counter family violence, help enforce maintenance orders, established a missing children's registry and curbed child sexual abuse.

I think my hon. friend, who is very interested in this very important program, knows that the government and the people of Canada have made substantial progress in this important area. I know with her—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Northumberland on a supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Prime Minister.

The fact is that there are still more than one million children living in poverty in this country. I will be happy to provide the Prime Minister with the statistics about where we stand in relation to the top industrialized nations.

According to the 1991 UN Development Program report, Canada's international social sector aid directed to the poor is less than 5 per cent of our aid expenditure. After last year's UN summit for children, our credibility is at stake.