

Oral Questions

While we in Canada are not without fault in polluting our own backyard, the U.S. should be made aware that we are in fact working hard toward acid rain abatement in our own country. It is up to this generation to fix the errors of its forefathers, so ensuing generations may enjoy life unencumbered by the ravages of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide.

In this, the eleventh hour, we are learning that acid rain is threatening human health as it has already claimed many subspecies. Let us not become the lemmings of the 20th century. It is crucial that there be 52 environment weeks every year.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

U.S.S.R.—CALL FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, are Canadians softening to the sweet talk of Mikhail Gorbachev? Remember the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 in which all adhering states, including Canada and the Soviets, pledged “to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms . . .”? Four years later the Soviet Communists invaded Afghanistan, ruthlessly killed women and men, and as the Canadian Ambassador told the United Nations “used butterfly-shaped bombs to kill children”.

● (1415)

No thoughtful Canadian wants war and certainly not a nuclear war. But remember the people of Afghanistan did not want war either and the Hungarian people only wanted freedom when Communist tanks rolled in.

Unilateral disarmament does not work. It will be time enough to stop Cruise testing in Canada and to reduce our Army, Navy and Air Force after the Communists withdraw completely from Afghanistan and get out of Ukraine, Hungary and Poland.

It will be time enough to let down our defences and disarm NATO after Gorbachev denounces the Communist objective to rule the world. Until then let us keep our powder dry.

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AIR CANADA

INTEREST RATE CHARGED ON CREDIT CARD TRANSACTIONS

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, the Parliament of Canada was effective in pressing the chartered banks into reducing interest rates on credit card transactions. It is now time for the Government of Canada, particularly the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie), to look at Crown corporations and their interest charges on credit transactions.

Air Canada, through its En Route credit card, has been charging 19 per cent and more for credit card transactions. First, it does not incur the expenses of financial institutions on credit card transactions, and second, it gets special consideration from the Government of Canada with respect to the use of the En Route card.

It is time for Parliament and the Government of Canada to make Crown corporations practise what the Government of Canada has been preaching. I call upon the Minister of Transport to investigate Air Canada, determine what interest rate it is charging, and put an end to onerous interest rates.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION

MEECH LAKE AGREEMENT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister, in the absence of the Prime Minister. I carefully read the answers given by the Deputy Prime Minister yesterday on the subject of the procedure to be followed by Parliament once an agreement is concluded between the Prime Minister of Canada and his provincial counterparts.

The Deputy Prime Minister admitted that in 1982, amendments to the Constitution had been proposed by Parliament, but he did not say whether the Government would allow any amendments to the agreement expected to result from today's meeting. I therefore want to ask him very specifically: Will the existing precedents on constitutional matters be followed? Will it be possible to amend the accord or will the Government use its overwhelming majority in the House to block constructive amendments that would reflect the concerns of many Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am not prepared to discuss details on something that is being negotiated at this very hour. Surely the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition would accept that.

My answer is the same today as it was yesterday. We are hopeful an agreement will be concluded this afternoon. If that is the case, I will be prepared to sit down with the Right Hon. Member's seat-mate, his House Leader, and the NDP House Leader, to work out a satisfactory arrangement so this matter can be debated by Parliament in such a manner that all Members would have an opportunity to deal with this very important issue.

PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister is confusing what is happening behind closed doors between the Prime Minister