

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**Mr. Gurbin:** I think that what is at issue here, regardless of all the rhetoric about the difference in pricing regimes, involves Liberal promises. The Minister would not want to mislead the House, but he is clearly wrong on statements he has made. The issue here involves Liberal promises of cheap gas and energy rebates. Those are the basic questions.

## APPLICATION OF FARM EQUIPMENT PURCHASE TAX CREDIT

**Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey):** My supplementary question, which is also directed to the Minister of Finance, concerns the very specific proposal which has been made by the Canadian Federation of Farm Implement Dealers. This proposal, which is for his consideration as Minister of Finance, is that the investment tax credit which can now be applied toward the purchase of new farm equipment also apply to the purchase of used farm equipment. This would help not only farmers but also implement dealers who are as severely affected as the agricultural sector. Will the Minister of Finance consider this proposal and ensure that it is implemented in his next budget?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, we promised to introduce an oil and gas pricing system that would be cheaper than the one proposed by the Progressive Conservative Government of 1979-80, and we have kept this promise. Today, prices paid by the Canadian consumer for oil and natural gas are still substantially lower than the levels projected by the Progressive Conservative Government of 1979-80. In this respect, we have kept our word, despite what the Hon. Member just said.

As for his suggestion, I have indicated that I would be pleased to receive suggestions from any Members of this House for my next budget. I am taking this suggestion as a proposal to be considered when the next budget comes up, and I shall give it my attention.

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[English]

## MINES AND MINING

## COMINCO LAY-OFFS—USE OF COMPANY HOUSING

**Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands):** Madam Speaker, my question, which is directed to the Minister of State for Mines, involves the 600 workers to be laid off on January 2 by Cominco at its lead/zinc mine at Pine Point in the Northwest Territories. What action will the Minister take to ensure that the three-quarters of the workers who reside in company housing can remain there at reduced rents for the duration of the lay-off, as was the case during the lay-offs at Faro and Schefferville? Will the Minister implement regulations requiring this kind of consideration for workers laid off in

remote, single industry towns, to help keep families and communities together?

**Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)):** Yes, Madam Speaker, I can inform the Hon. Member that we will make every possible effort to work with the company to see that the workers can remain in their homes. At this moment, I would like to remind the Hon. Member that the Cominco lay-off will be a temporary one.

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## AGRICULTURE

## FORECAST OF NET FARM INCOME

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre):** Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance in the absence of the Minister of Agriculture. Over the last day or so, the Outlook Conference for Agriculture has been taking place in Ottawa. We find that net farm income for 1983 is projected to be \$3.7 billion, about the same as it was in 1974. Since those dollars in 1983 will buy between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of what they would buy in 1974, farmers are, in effect, facing a halving of their net income in eight years. What policies have been prepared by the Government to offset this violent decline in farm income? How will the Government turn this situation around?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, as the Hon. Member is aware, the Canadian economy is not alone in this respect. The economies of all industrialized countries and in fact, the entire world economy is going through a very severe crisis. All sectors, including the manufacturing sector and the mining sector, to name one of our primary resource sectors, have been substantially affected. Business profits are much lower than they were in the past, and unfortunately, not a single sector of the Canadian economy seems to have escaped the international crisis the world is going through today. So the solution is not to try and find some kind of arrangement for a specific sector, but to stimulate the entire economy so that all sectors will be able to benefit. That is why our goal is to reduce the rate of inflation and with it our interest rates, thus making it easier for various sectors to borrow and invest, and I hope that farmers will also be among those who will benefit.

As for the specific situation in the agricultural sector, the Hon. Member is aware that thanks to efforts by the Canadian Government, we have had record sales abroad this year. Our farmers will benefit even if prices are low, and at least we have succeeded in expanding our foreign markets and selling all the products we produce here in Canada. These efforts will be continued. The Minister of Agriculture has tabled in the House some very important legislation, namely the Canagrex Bill, and I hope that we can count on the support of the Opposition to expedite passage of this Bill.