

Oral Questions

What is the difference between a Tory environment minister and anybody else in this country, particularly somebody from the opposite side? We care about the environment. We have done our homework. We have made the commitments. We have taken the action, and we have something to clean up the environment after all the years of neglect.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

At Geneva in September and again today in the green plan the minister soft-pedals the urgent threat of global warming and ignores the overwhelming consensus of scientists that we can and must cut carbon dioxide emissions by 20 per cent by 2005.

Why does the minister's plan contain action to help Canadians prepare for global warming instead of stopping it dead in its tracks and committing Canada to cut our emissions by 20 per cent by 2005?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the position of the Government of Canada on this issue is well known. It is one that is leading most of the industrialized countries around the world.

We are going to make sure that emissions by the year 2000 are no higher than they were by the year 1990. We are moving to encourage international partners to reach a convention and protocols simultaneously at the Brazil conference in 1992.

We are one of the countries that is funding less developed countries to develop the necessary research so that they can be at the table as equal partners. We are right at the forefront of that. We have made the direct commitment in Geneva that we fully recognize that we would have to go further after the year 2000. We want to go further, but with all the rest of the international community following because this is an international problem.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same minister. Somebody has to lead, and it is obvious it is not going to be Canada now that this plan has been released.

The government has green words on alternative energy and conservation to slow down greenhouse gases, but it has a grey record since 1984 of savage cuts from \$500 million to \$50 million on alternative energy and conservation. We have a green plan today that is full of surprise packages which are full of hot air.

Is there one concrete action, one concrete funding program that has been approved by cabinet, now to cut greenhouse gas emissions and to improve the use of alternative energy and conservation?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite talks about grey words. On global environmental security, we are talking about \$575 million of new money to deal with the issue. To my mind that green paper means something in this community.

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

For decades Canadian governments, led largely by the Liberals and now today by the Tories, have refused our repeated demands to get tough with corporate polluters. This failure, as the government knows, is a major contributor to the environmental crisis that we are in now.

This government had an opportunity through the green to change that. It had an opportunity to come out strong for some kind of enforcement, yet it proposes to give taxpayers' money to those very corporations that pollute our environment.

Will this government abandon voluntary compliance, bring in real legislation with real enforcement, and make the corporate polluters pay?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the NDP had read the green plan carefully, she would have found that in the Green Plan we are talking very specifically about four new pieces of legislation and fifteen new areas of regulation.

Having said that, I believe, while they are required, that we have to go further in inciting Canadians to work as one. We have to work as a federal government with provincial, regional and municipal governments, with the private sector, and with Canadians as a whole to reach the purposes that have been set out in the green plan. Regulations, yes. Legislation, yes. But co-operation first and foremost.