

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Trudeau:** There are about 40 days left of parliamentary time before the end of June. Out of that one must take into account Opposition days, special motions, and so on. But if the Hon. Member Leader of the Opposition will ask his House Leader to sit down with our House Leader to decide how this time will be allocated in a reasonable, sensible way, so that the Opposition can debate the motions and debate second reading, but seriously consider this legislation, I can guarantee to him that this legislation, which is of importance to the western farmer, will be passed expeditiously. Can he give me that guarantee that this House Leader will bring allocation of time?

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Bring it on.

## REQUEST THAT FARM FUEL TAX BE REDUCED

**Mr. Len Gustafson (Assiniboia):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister might remember that in 1980 he promised the western farmers that he would not forget about them, since there was no representation from western Canada. For two years we have been calling for a western grain stabilization payment.

**Some Hon. Members:** Question!

**Mr. Gustafson:** My question is directed to the Minister of Finance. He will know that the farmers have very serious cash flow problems this spring. This is why we have addressed the Western Grain Stabilization Program as a priority. Furthermore, the high fuel costs to farmers are bankrupting them, as well as high interest rates, and their cost of production is exorbitant. Will the Minister of Finance do the right thing and reduce the fuel costs by reducing the federal tax on farm fuels?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, some Conservative Members have discovered that there are problems amongst the farming community, and their answer is to do something about the Western Grain Stabilization Act. Our answer has been to try to introduce measures that affect farmers all across the country, not only western farmers.

We have implemented a number of measures which are of service to all farmers across the country, and that is what we intend to do. As to the specific question raised by the Hon. Member, I stand by my Budget of last February 15.

## EFFECT OF INTEREST RATES ON FARMERS

**Mr. Len Gustafson (Assiniboia):** The Minister will know that when his Government took power in 1980 fuel costs to farmers were 92 cents a gallon. I just got word by telephone that fuel costs today are \$1.80 a gallon. They are double. You will remember some of the promises that Government made, Mr. Speaker.

● (1430)

**Mr. McKnight:** On farm fuel.

**Mr. McMillan:** Phony promises.

**Mr. McDermid:** Where is Allan MacEachen?

**Mr. Gustafson:** Another problem facing farmers is the high interest rates.

**Mr. Speaker:** Will the Hon. Member please ask his question?

**Mr. Gustafson:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has again and again promised reduction of high interest rates. Will the Minister of Finance consider and bring in a program, which the Minister of Agriculture cannot bring in seemingly, and alleviate the problems of high interest rates for farmers?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member talks about fuel costs. What he should also mention is that if the Tory plan had been put into effect—

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Nonsense.

**Mr. Lalonde:**—and if we had not defeated the Tory Budget in 1979, fuel costs today would be at international price levels for farmers.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Nonsense.

**Mr. Epp:** No way.

**Mr. Lalonde:** And this would have meant even higher prices than the price farmers are called upon to pay at the present time.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Lalonde:** These are the facts which the Hon. Member should know.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Lalonde:** I understand Hon. Members over there shouting, because they are afraid of the facts. They are afraid of recognizing what their policy would have meant for this country, and that is why their policy was rejected wisely by Canadians in 1980.

As far as the interest rates are concerned, we have taken steps to reduce interest rates. Interest rates have come down quite significantly over the last two years, as the Hon. Member knows. They have been cut by half, approximately. In addition, we have introduced measures to take care of farmers in difficulties. Over \$25 million in support has been put into such a program to help farmers in difficulty, in addition to the increased funding provided to the Farm Credit Corporation. My friend should at least bother to examine the facts, get briefed, and he will realize that this Government has delivered in terms of its concerns for the farmers of this country.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!