

Canadian people. Someone from the Tory ranks should advise the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) that he has not been elected President of the United States and that our system is not the American one. It is time for the Prime Minister to stop acting as if he were the President.

This man, who accused the previous Government of every sin under the sun, then turned around and increased the operation budget of his office by 57 percent and increased his staff by 31 per cent. He preaches restraint to the Canadian people, and hands over a ridiculous increase to senior citizens. This is the man who says he is proud of Canadians, and then turns around in *Fortune* magazine and dumps all over the people and businessmen of the country. This is sickening. The Prime Minister should apologize to the workers of Canada, Canadian businesses, and Canadian people for his disgraceful performance.

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AGRICULTURE

LEVEL OF FARM INCOME

Mr. Gus Mitges (Grey-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, it is important for obvious reasons that we do everything possible to maintain a healthy primary agriculture industry. Having said that, I cannot for the life of me understand why anyone stays in farming, or would take up farming for a living. As a former country veterinarian for many years, I know of what I speak. Farming is not only a seven days a week job, but there is very little return or profit to be made.

Last year net farm income was \$3.8 billion. The number of farmers in Canada is estimated at 350,000, which averages out to less than \$11,000 per farmer, well below the poverty line. Since 1981 the return on assets has been negative due to the cost price squeeze and a decline in the value of farm assets.

While interest rates have dropped they are still too high, and will likely remain high because of our massive debt. Right now farmers collectively have a \$20 billion debt burden which is soaking up 17 per cent of farm operating expenses. Many farmers have declared bankruptcy, and thousands more are in dire financial straits.

We can no longer count on band-aid solutions to the problems of agriculture. Future action has to be carefully planned and executed to have lasting long-term effects. It is my hope that actions taken by the Government so far, as well as future actions, will restore a renewed hope, greater confidence, and viability to agriculture and its producers. It is imperative that we get behind our farmers 100 per cent. If we do not, all of us will be in deep trouble. We can do without a lot of things in this world—

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member's time has expired.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

HAVE-NOT REGIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

First I wish to congratulate him on enhancing Canada's image in the Caribbean, and more recently, in Jamaica. But let us get back to what is happening in Canada.

Recent events, especially in the Domtar affair, have shown that the Government's current policy does not altogether favour regional economic development.

The main estimates tabled by his colleague have shown a substantial reduction of \$112 million in aid to less advantaged regions.

My question to the Right Hon. Prime Minister is as follows: Is the Prime Minister telling our less advantaged regions that they can ask for Ottawa's help to set up beaneries but if they have any big projects like Domtar that would create thousands of jobs, they should not count on Ottawa?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think my Right Hon. friend was wrong in his reference to beaneries, because like other governments, we have made investments each worth several million dollars and hundreds of thousands of dollars, which have had a very positive impact on regions in Quebec and elsewhere.

As far as Domtar is concerned, the Leader of the Opposition and his fellow Members are asking us, and rightly so, to act with caution in order to bring down the federal deficit. My Hon. friend knows perfectly well how the previous Government's legacy has affected Canada. He has spoken on the subject at length, and he is right.

That being said, it is extremely difficult for the Government to consider requests that would have a federal Treasury that is well nigh bare inject \$100 million into a project for a Quebec company that is in very good shape financially and which has a very sound and impressive record.

That is more or less why we have taken the position that in the circumstances, we cannot go ahead and write a cheque for \$100 million.

That being said, I may add that we are having talks with Domtar, and I hope to discuss the matter further with the Premier of Quebec next week, and we shall probably be getting some interesting proposals either from the Government or the company about ways in which we could help the Eastern Townships and Quebec realize this important project.