

Oral Questions

take is a new Liberal policy of retroactive countervail measures.

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CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The day after April Fool's, CIDA delivered by hand letters to CUSO and other NGOs announcing that their grants would be effectively cut from 3:3 for each dollar to 2 for each dollar, an effective cut of 25 per cent, and other amounts for other NGOs.

These NGOs had contracts with CIDA, some signed very recently. Yet CIDA has summarily broken those contracts, forcing NGOs to renege on some of their own development contracts for development and to lay off staff.

Will the minister tell us why the government has targeted development NGOs, our most effective and efficient ODA delivery system, for such massive cuts?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, let me first say that I will want to look into the detail of the question. The Minister for External Relations is not in the House but she and I will look at the details of the question.

Let me say that there is no targeting of development NGOs. This government has demonstrated a very real reliance upon those organizations in a variety of ways, including facilitating development assistance to countries with which we do not want to have, for various reasons, a government-to-government relation.

The hon. member knows that the country faces very serious economic conditions. We have to deal with them. That requires some policies of restraint. No part of Canadian government activity, indeed no part of the Canadian community generally, can be exempt from the implications of trying to put a Canadian economy in shape today so that it will serve the interests of the Canadian future.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, our concern is with the people who require this aid in the Third World countries. In order that the NGOs can plan in the future, will the minister commit this government to review these cuts in consultation with the NGOs, and will he commit the government to

ensuring that no further cuts will be made in this particular manner?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): The government is always prepared to engage in consultation with NGOs and with others.

I would not want to leave a misleading impression in the House. We are dealing with certain very difficult conditions of restraint. We are taking account of those. I would not want leaders of any NGO organization to think that a process of consultation would be put in place that would reverse the necessity for CIDA, like other parts of the Canadian government, to be affected by the restraint program that economic circumstances and the profligate practices of past governments have placed upon the country.

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HOUSING

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Perhaps in the absence of the Minister of Finance I could bring the Prime Minister up to date with some housing statistics from his own housing agency, CMHC, and including the Minister of Employment.

Released reports today indicate that housing starts across this country are down 21 per cent in Ontario, and in western Canada and Atlantic Canada there has been absolutely no improvement, contrary to what the Prime Minister has indicated today.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister when his government, instead of making false assurances and giving hopeless rhetoric to the people of Canada, will admit that its policies on the economy are too little, too late and too painful?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the policies of the government are neither too little nor are they too late, nor are they too painful.

We are very sympathetic to the people who have lost their jobs. That is why we are trying to bring our training programs into line with what people will need for jobs in the future, not for jobs in the past.

I would like to point out to the hon. member that housing starts are running at a rate of 106,000 versus 104,000 the month before. It is very clearly the beginning of some signs of life.