

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mrs. Finestone:—or you are being discriminatory based on language. Therefore what possible lesson is there in this action and how will it benefit the B.C. lumber workers? What I would really like to know is how you think it is going to be helpful.

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I guess there was a question in there somewhere. However, I believe that the Minister of Finance and the Secretary of State for External Affairs have responded most appropriately in the circumstances to what they regarded as a situation that was very serious for Canada. We took the situation seriously and we responded in an appropriate way. I do not know if that answers the question because I do not know what the question was.

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● (1450)

ENVIRONMENT CANADA

TASK FORCE STUDY

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister and is on the second task force report on the future of the Department of the Environment. I wonder if the Deputy Prime Minister could assure the House that, regardless of whatever recommendations may be contained in this second report, there will be no demotion of the Department of the Environment and that there will be no stripping away from that Department of the responsibilities it now has for the environment of Canada.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I answered a similar question last week when I informed the House that there was a follow-on study team. I explained the purpose of it last week. When the material is ready it will be tabled as though it were part of the 21 reports that were tabled March 11, with the same understanding that the follow-on report does not contain government policy but contains a series of options that will be referred to committee for examination there in due course.

TABLING OF REPORT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, what the Deputy Prime Minister was not asked on Friday was for an assurance that there be no demotion of the Department of the Environment and no stripping away of its responsibilities. Today we are looking for an assurance of that kind and also for an announced intention on the part of the Government to table that report now. I understand that the report is ready and has been for some time. When can we see it?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): As soon as it is printed, Mr. Speaker. It is my intention to table it on the same basis that the reports were tabled on March 11. The matter will be referred to committee and examined there in the same way that all of the other study team reports—

Mr. Blaikie: What about the assurance?

Mr. Nielsen: The same kinds of questions were asked, as the hon. gentleman will recall, on March 11 and subsequent days, and the same answers were given consistently. The answer was that this is a first orderly step on the way to cabinet discussion. The committee system will be employed as well as the usual facilities of the House.

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AGRICULTURE

FARM CREDIT LEGISLATION

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Last July the Minister promised to bring in farmer-creditor arrangements legislation with real teeth to assist farmers facing foreclosure and bankruptcy. In January the Minister knuckled under to the banks and said that he would water down the legislation to suit them. Will the Minister bring in strong legislation to help the 8,000 farmers facing serious financial difficulty, not just a watered-down bankers' version?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to reject most of the information contained in the Hon. Member's preamble. The simple answer to the question is that the record will show that we have fulfilled our commitments and we have every intention of delivering on this one as well.

TIMING OF INTRODUCTION

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to have this legislation passed by the end of June. Could the Minister explain why it is that the legislation has not been tabled in the House in the last five weeks if the Prime Minister is really serious about having this legislation on the books by the end of June?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Government are serious about moving forward with this piece of legislation. I would ask the Hon. Member to check his calendar. We have not yet reached the end of June. I would hope that we would find support forthcoming from his colleagues, and indeed from my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, so that, depending on them, we will indeed be able to meet that deadline.