

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

GOVERNMENT ENERGY POLICY

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Madam Speaker, on November 24, 1980, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro) promised he would bring forward a northern energy policy by March, 1981. Would you believe that now, almost two years after the deadline, nothing has been done and no comprehensive policy exists?

Ad hoc programs such as the Remote Community Demonstration Program, announced with great fanfare last April, have withered on the vine, and the Home Heating Oil Assistance Program, the Federal Power Support Program and the Commercial Power Rate Relief Program, which together provide minimal relief to small far northern communities, are scheduled to expire on March 31 this year.

The unanimous recommendations of the House of Commons Subcommittee on the Northern Canada Power Commission gather dust on the shelves of the Department while the Minister twiddles his thumbs. The last of a series of promises concerning the northern energy policy was made on November 8, 1982, when the Minister promised a Cabinet decision by Christmas which, needless to say, was not forthcoming. Northerners are getting tired of worn out promises, and demand to know where the Government stands on northern energy issues.

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AGRICULTURE

FARMERS' CREDITORS ARRANGEMENT ACT—AMENDING LEGISLATION

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Madam Speaker, in 1982 farm bankruptcies were up by 60 per cent over 1981. That is really only the tip of the iceberg when you consider how many farmers were forced into early foreclosure and, of course, the machinery seizures that became commonplace across Canada.

The Canadian family farm is under a good deal of pressure these days, yet day after day the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) stands in his place saying that the Government has little room to move on the issue. I should like to remind the Minister and Members of the Government that Bill C-653 was introduced for first reading on April 22, 1982. This is a Bill which would provide a simple and inexpensive procedure for farmers to rearrange their affairs when cash flow becomes insufficient to meet current obligations as they become due. A similar Act was introduced in the 1930s which enabled farmers to protect themselves from the banks.

● (1115)

We have seen recent actions by the Canadian Farmers' Survival Association using very unorthodox tactics in an effort to save their own farms and their neighbours' farms. Today the Canadian Bankers' Association threatened farmers across the

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country by saying that banks would start pulling loans and being more hesitant in giving loans to farmers if this unorthodox tactic continues. It is a desperate situation. The Canadian family farm is being threatened. The Government has an opportunity to move now—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF PERMANENT JOB-CREATION PROGRAMS IN FORTHCOMING BUDGET

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Many Canadians have told me that the only job creation programs of the Government are the alphabet soup programs which are very short-term in nature and do not provide any permanent jobs. They are primarily there for political effect. As an example, the NEED Program provides 12-week to 16-week jobs just to requalify people for the unemployment insurance rolls, but no permanent jobs.

Could the Minister today make a specific statement in the House to give some hope to people who have simply given up looking for jobs, a number which has increased about three times in the last two years, that there will be some permanent job creation programs in the forthcoming budget?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, before I reply to that specific question I think it would be very helpful if the Hon. Member got better information. To begin with, the NEED Program does not provide jobs for 12 to 16 weeks. In fact the average length of jobs which we are approving at the present time is upwards of 32 weeks. They are providing work which ranges all the way from the restoration of housing on Indian reserves, to the development of fish facilities in the Maritimes, and to the provision of sewer and water facilities in other Provinces. We just signed an agreement in British Columbia, for the information of the noise makers over there on that side, which provides for major reforestation projects at Terrace Bay.

The kinds of projects which are being provided across the country are designed to make major contributions to the productive capacity of the communities, to provide for new municipal infrastructure services, to provide major services in the social service area, such as language training, and the ability to provide women with care centres for children.

It would be very helpful for the Hon. Member, before he rises and makes blanket condemnations, to spend a little more time making a careful assessment of the kind of work which is in fact being done. It is providing a real clear option to people to return to work as opposed to having to go on social assistance or social welfare. That is what Canadians want. They