

Beef producers have no means of insuring livestock feed supplies against the effects of drought except in a few areas where crop insurance offers forage coverage. Crop producers, on the other hand, can protect themselves against significant drought loss by participating in the crop insurance program.

Crop insurance is designed to cover only the variable costs of a farming operation. The debt load arising from unpaid, fixed costs can rise significantly each year. Consequently, the farmers in the worst financial condition are those who have experienced successive years of drought. Averaging data over the three year period reflects the repetitive nature of the loss.

Farmers outside the drought area can request a review of their situation by completing an Application for Review and forwarding it to the drought office. Once the applications are received, they will be grouped to determine eligibility and level of payment on the same basis as those already within the drought area.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

APPOINTMENT OF CANADIAN AMBASSADOR TO IRELAND— ALLEGED PARTISANSHIP OF APPOINTEE

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer in response to a question asked in the Senate on February 4 last by the Honourable Senator MacEachen regarding External Affairs—Appointment of Canadian Ambassador to Ireland—Alleged Partisanship of Appointee.

(The answer follows:)

It is not appropriate for Canadian Ambassadors to comment as described.

All representatives of Canada are governed by the Code of Conduct Guidelines.

While Mr. McDermott has been appointed Ambassador-designate to Ireland, he has not yet presented his letter of credentials to the Irish government, nor assumed such responsibilities.

It is the Department's understanding that Mr. McDermott will do so upon his official arrival in Dublin in May, at which time he will have, of course, resigned from his position with the Canadian Labour Congress.

PUBLIC WORKS

CLEANING SERVICES—POSSIBLE LAY-OFF OF EMPLOYEES

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer in response to a question asked in the Senate on February 4 last by the Honourable Senator Marsden regarding Public Works—Cleaning Services—Possible Lay-off of Employees.

(The answer follows:)

Several months ago, the government announced its intention to reduce the work force in the federal Public

Service by 15,000 person-years over the next five years. As part of this downsizing, Treasury Board instructed the Department of Public Works to reduce its work force by 549 person-years by the end of the 1986/87 fiscal year.

On October 4th of last year, Public Works Canada forwarded a surplus employee notice to 304 of its employees. Among these are 265 cleaning workers providing services to Canada Post facilities. This group includes 55 women and 180 persons over 50 years of age.

Cleaning services represent an important part of the corporation's accommodations costs, that is about 14 per cent. It is possible to obtain these services at a lesser cost from the private sector. It is estimated that these cleaning costs can be reduced by 3 million dollars a year (which represents about 2%).

The statement by John Gordon of the Public Service Alliance is speculative. It is not necessarily true that private sector employees are paid the minimum wage nor that the quality of the cleaning services will be reduced.

Since October 4, 1985, when the 304 surplus notices were issued at Public Works Canada, efforts to facilitate redeployment have included;

—a departmental staffing clearance system, whereby all proposed staffing actions are reviewed centrally and potentially qualified priority candidates are referred for consideration.

—counselling services, by staffing officers, corporate staffing, the PSC and employee assistance programme coordinators who are professional counsellors. Staffing officers have received training to assist them in providing effective counselling services.

—job search activities, including contacts and marketing with both other departments and agencies and outside organizations.

Barriers to the successful redeployment of affected employees are;

—that many live in small towns where there are few job opportunities. Relocation to larger centres is difficult because of the higher cost of living.

—that most of the functions being performed by these employees are being discontinued for referral to similar positions.

CANADA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

TRANS-BORDER POLLUTION PROBLEMS

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer in response to a question asked in the Senate on February 5 last by the Honourable Senator Guay regarding Canada-United States Relations—Trans-border Pollution Problems.

(The answer follows:)

The United States' program to locate a site for its second nuclear waste repository identified 20 potential