

*Oral Questions***MULTICULTURALISM**

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Multiculturalism. The Minister has just announced an election time increase in funding for multiculturalism. The last Liberal Government did something similar before the last election and increased it to \$25 million.

Why did the Conservative Government allow the funding for multiculturalism to drop back toward \$22 million after the 1984 election? Did the Government only discover the funding needs of multiculturalism as the next election drew near?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Mr. Speaker, the Government began making a strong commitment to creating a more equal opportunity society on September 4, 1984. It was this Government that established the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism. It was this Government that implemented Employment Equity, Bill C-62, which the Hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration brought in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1440)

Mr. Weiner: Indeed, it is this Government that is bringing forward the first multiculturalism Act anywhere in the western world. It is backing that up with a firm policy and new directions.

REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Ethnocultural Council with which each of the caucuses met today has called for a great deal more than just funding for multiculturalism. Above all, it has called for a Commissioner of Multiculturalism.

Given the approach of report stage consideration of Bill C-93 in the House, is the Minister prepared to consider audit amendments to Bill C-93 which are required to facilitate such review of the Government's policy? Will he consider these amendments which were defeated by his colleagues in the legislative committee at a time when they knew opposition Members were not there to speak to these amendments?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Mr. Speaker, as you know, the chairman of that legislative committee, the Member from Edmonton, has brought forward the recommendations of that committee. They will soon be at report stage and third reading in the House. Certainly you would not expect me to comment on what took place there.

I would simply say that I will be the active promoter. I see this as my role in the entire multicultural process. I, with the help of other members of the Government, will be helping monitor it in a cross-government commitment.

As I indicated, since September, 1984, we have continued to reinforce the strength of that commitment. In terms of ethnocultural appointments, there has been the recent appointment of a Supreme Court Justice coming from that very ethnocultural community.

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AGRICULTURE

DROUGHT IN WESTERN CANADA—EFFECT ON LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS

Mr. Bill Gottselig (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. The drought situation in western Canada has now reached the critical stage for the livestock producers. Many areas have had no precipitation since last August. There is no grass. Winter carryover of feed supplies are rapidly being used up to maintain the cattle herds.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister advise the House and, more important, the livestock producers of western Canada what new forms of assistance they may expect immediately in order to address this very serious situation?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise the House that the Minister of Agriculture is on his way to western Canada today. He and his Parliamentary Secretary, the Member for Brandon—Souris, along with the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds will be viewing the situation firsthand, visiting farmers and talking to them.

Tomorrow there will be a meeting of provincial and federal Ministers to talk about programs that can be put together in a co-ordinated fashion to address this very serious issue. We consider it to be a very serious issue and believe there is a provincial as well as federal responsibility.

The Prime Minister has acknowledged the responsibility of the federal Government. The Minister of Agriculture, indeed the Government, has responded in the past to the needs of agriculture and I am confident it will do so again.

I look forward to tomorrow's meetings hopefully producing a very positive and fruitful result.

HERD STABILIZATION PROGRAM PROPOSAL

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. In view of the serious drought situation that has already been described, is the Government of Canada prepared to put in place a herd stabilization program to end the uncertainty as to whether there will be assistance? Is it willing to provide funding as it has in the past to move feed into the drought areas, or to move the cattle, and put in place a herd stabilization program?