

Oral Questions

cent. These are interest rates beyond all reason. Last Friday the government stated in that announcement that there would be billions of dollars of assistance through the prairie grain advance payments program.

Can the Acting Prime Minister or the Acting Minister of Agriculture clarify if the interest-free portion of the prairie grain advance payments program is going to be reinstated so that farmers will be able to stay on their farms and have funds to plant a crop this spring.

• (1450)

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the government is not going to reintroduce the interest-free portion of the advance payments program.

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Cardiff: There is no shame in doing that. We have come out with much better programs that meet the needs of farmers of today. The programs that were announced last Friday show that this government is responding to the needs of farmers in Canada, more than any other government. We are not ashamed of that at all.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

This government is escalating its war on women, it is escalating its war on democracy.

In Newfoundland, thousands of women are being thrown out of work as fish plants close. Their families are disintegrating because of the disintegration of the fishing industry. Their communities are falling apart around them. They are turning to women's centres to help keep body and soul together and to keep their sanity.

Will the minister urge her government to apologize to the women of St. John's, Newfoundland?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): First of all, I am surprised that the hon. member would be discussing this. I understand there were a few inci-

dents at the Liberal leadership forum in Winnipeg where the Liberal party did not seem too interested in hearing the voices of opposition.

I really think it is important. Certainly there is a right to legitimate protest. But when demonstrators come into a government office and after a reasonable period of time, after a number of requests, refuse to leave and therefore impede the progress of proper government business, obviously some actions have to be taken.

Why I am most surprised at the member asking is that last week the Secretary of State said in this House that he sent his officials to Newfoundland to work with the women's centres of Newfoundland to assist them in providing project funding which will enable them for a period of time to continue with their services until they can find other resources, and to work with the province. There will be an appropriate funding agency for the ongoing services of women.

We are making every effort. We are making efforts such as the opening of the Women's Enterprise Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland.

I think the hon. member should be applauding those efforts we are making on behalf of women of this country.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the minister has absolutely no idea how pompous and condescending she looks to the women out there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member will put her question.

Mrs. Catterall: Will the minister apologize for her attitude? Will she insist on the restoration of funding to women's centres? Will she stop defending a government that is doing battle against women?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Perhaps the member has not listened. Time and time again I have told the member of the programs and the work of this government in support of women, in support of the project funding for women's centres and women's organizations and the money that is available to assist with family violence right across this country. The women from the Canadian Jobs Strategy Program assists women in training and finding a job. The member is not interested in listening to that. We are the government