

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, January 23, 1987

The House met at 11 a.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 21

[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DRAFT LEGISLATION—MINISTER'S ACCUSATION AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYER

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment (Mr. McMillan) has made an unprecedented attack on a Toronto environmental lawyer who criticized his environmental protection draft Bill. In a letter sent to some environment groups, and some members of the news media, the Minister accused Toby Vigod of the Canadian Environmental Law Association of being "factually wrong" when she criticized his draft law.

In an interview, Ms. Vigod and other environmentalists said that they could not recall a federal Environment Minister launching such a public attack on an environmental figure for criticisms of the Minister's work. "He seems very defensive of a Bill which is only a draft Bill," Ms. Vigod said. "We are willing to sit down with him and suggest changes." A spokesman for the Minister said the Minister had offered to meet with Ms. Vigod and that he wanted "to smooth things out".

This temper tantrum by the Minister is pathetic, considering his Government's promises of openness, consensus-building, and consultation.

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● (1105)

AGRICULTURE

SPECIALITY CROPS—REQUEST THAT GROWERS BE INCLUDED IN AID PACKAGE

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, farmers who grew speciality crops like mustard, peas, lentils, tomatoes, et cetera, received no assistance from the billion dollar aid package this year. Hon. Members should be aware that 900,000 acres were seeded to these crops in Saskatchewan alone last year.

The Government has indicated that speciality crop prices do not follow wheat, corn, and soya bean pricing and therefore were unaffected by the U.S. Farm Bill. However, how does it

explain the price declines of more than 30 per cent in virtually all these so-called contract crops? Yellow mustard has fallen from \$15 per hundredweight to \$9.50 per hundredweight; canary seed from \$12 per hundredweight to \$8 per hundredweight; and lentils from \$22 to \$16, all since the decline in grain prices precipitated by the U.S. Farm Bill.

I call upon the Government to include specialty crops in any remaining aid yet to come, the \$700 million, to be fair in its allocations from now on, and to include all crops affected by the U.S. Farm Bill.

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[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

Mr. Fernand Jourdenais (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wonder why the New Democrats and the Liberals have set their sights on a single target these past few days. Why are they so intent on conducting a negative opposition campaign against on the RCMP investigation into the Oerlikon affair?

Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, they are not putting up a smoke screen so that Canadians might be blind to the fact that the deficit has been declining steadily since the Conservative Party took office. Our Government has taken the necessary steps and the deficit has already been reduced by \$10 billion.

[English]

The Opposition does not want Canadians to know that the Bank of Canada rate has fallen to its lowest level in 10 years or that five-year mortgage rates are down 3.5 percentage points to 10.75 per cent, a savings of \$116 per month or almost \$7,000 over five years on a \$50,000 loan.

Employment is up, unemployment is down. The number of Canadians living below the Statistics Canada poverty line declined by over a quarter of a million people, the first such decline since 1981.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, this Government's avowed objective is to manage the country on a sound economic basis, a fact to which a number of financial institutions have been attesting all along. We have been doing very well until now, so the Opposition Parties may indeed scream and talk rubbish about any issue which strikes their fancy.