

Supply

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the proposal made by the Member for Calgary West. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is agreed and so ordered.

The Member for Beaches—Woodbine on the same point of order.

Mr. Young: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order that the Parliamentary Secretary raised, the reason that this Party has agreed to this highly unusual process is to allow the Government Members to have an additional four days to seriously give thought to the implications of this motion. Hopefully, in the finest of parliamentary tradition, some brave soul over there will lead a parliamentary revolt against what this Cabinet is apparently trying to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the Member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, in the month of February the Minister announced that he was going to be moving immediately to examine the drafting of new regulations with respect to CFCs. As he will know, CFCs are at the root of some of the problems that we have been having with respect to the ozone layer in the atmosphere.

I would like to ask him what he did between February and June with respect to the CFC regulations.

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, this Government entered into an agreement in Montreal in 1987 to control and protect the ozone layer. The obligation was to the effect of reducing by 1989 the CFC emissions by 50 per cent. I announced a few months ago that not only would we comply with this obligation, but we would exceed it and increase our reduction effort to 85 per cent.

• (1550)

I also announced that if, as we believe, we find alternative technologies and substances that we will be able to eliminate practically all use of CFCs and emissions in Canada by the year 2000. Thus I proceeded to issue the new regulations restricting the use of CFCs.

In this process my departmental lawyers discovered that when Parliament enacted the Canadian Environmental Protection Act last year that a technical problem was introduced into the Bill. This technical problem is to

the effect that for a certain number of specific substances, among them CFCs, which are listed in the law, we cannot move to modify the regulations without coming back to Parliament. Instead of proceeding by way of regulation, which is the normal way to do it and which was the purpose contemplated by the law, there are technical problems and we must amend the law. That was told to me by my departmental lawyers and confirmed by the Department of Justice.

I moved to meet my fellow Members of the House. I courteously informed them that I would have to table an amendment and I requested their help. The only answer I got from the Hon. Member for Hamilton East was an inflammatory statement as reported in the papers saying that the Government was inefficient, that it would not move on CFCs, et cetera. That was the answer to a friendly request for collaboration from the Opposition to fight CFCs and to protect the ozone layer. They built politics into their reaction. Thus today they dare to ask a question about it.

Ms. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) is on record as having made a commitment that all economic decisions should be environmentally assessed. I would like to ask the Minister's interpretation of whether or not budgetary decisions are economic decisions.

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, that is a grey zone in the assessment process. The assessment process which was in effect under the guidelines four years ago dealt with projects. It is true that policies and programs were also mentioned in the process. What we know is that a court of law recently announced that the provisions to the guidelines dealing with projects were legally binding. Of course, the Government's position is that budget decisions and, mainly, deficit decreasing measures built into the Budget are decisions of the Department of Finance and are located at the core of the Government's sovereignty. It is absolutely certain that no country in the world should or could be able to submit to a prior environmental assessment the definition and the construction of a Budget. The Budget is at the heart of the Government's actions. It deals with the margin of manoeuvre of a Government. It does not have to be preceded by an environmental assessment. The position of the Government is that ERP does not create any legal obligation for the Government to submit to a prior assessment of budget decisions.