

S.O. 22

● (1405)

[Translation]

TRADE

EXPORTS—GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Louis-Hébert): In October, Mr. Speaker, Canadian exports reached a record high of \$10.9 billion in seasonally adjusted figures, an increase of 2.1 per cent over September, the third consecutive monthly increase.

In the first ten months of 1985 exports climbed to \$100.1 billion, or \$7.6 billion more than in the same period in 1984.

Canadian imports declined by 2 per cent in October, down to \$8.7 billion in seasonally adjusted figures. That is very close to the level recorded each month since July, the fifth monthly decline last year.

Mr. Speaker, our highest trade balance was achieved with our main trading partner, the United States, namely \$18.1 billion over the first ten months of 1985, an increase of nearly \$2 billion over the same period in 1984.

Those figures clearly show the effectiveness of our Government's policies and confirm that Canadians can indeed compete with their main trading partner. By giving an overwhelming majority to the new Government in September 1984, the people were saying that they had had enough of the old entrepreneurship-stifling Liberal policies—

Mr. Speaker: I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member, but her allotted time has expired.

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INDUSTRY

SALE OF GULF REFINERY—CONSEQUENCES FOR MONTREAL EAST

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal-Sainte-Marie): During the Christmas holiday, Mr. Speaker, Quebecers were taken for a ride. They were conned by these Conservative Members, by these Conservative Ministers, and by the Prime Minister.

As it happened, the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) came to Montreal on December 27 to tell Quebecers that his Party, his Government, had agreed to let a foreign company buy the Gulf refinery with the intention of closing it down, thus throwing 450 more workers out on the street and doing away with competition. Yet the same Government had the option of rejecting that deal and giving a chance to *Gaz métropolitain*, a Quebec and Canadian company which was anxious to buy the refinery so as to protect those jobs and maintain a healthy competition for Quebec consumers.

Mr. Speaker, I think we must commend the Bourassa Government which, in view, of the inaction and incompetence

on the part of this Conservative administration, decided to assume the leadership. In co-operation with the Quebec Minister of Energy, it is now trying to reach a solution with Ultramar so as to maintain those jobs in Montreal East and protect Quebec consumers.

I dare hope that the Quebec Conservative Members, particularly the Ministers, will wake up, put an end to the insulting and humiliating treatment they are getting from their Ontario colleagues and those of the other provinces, and uphold the interests of all Quebecers.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

PLIGHT OF FARMERS THREATENED BY BANKS WITH FORECLOSURES

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, no Canadian should lose his land because of economic conditions over which he has no control. Yet more than 1,400 families lost their farms during the last three years. This is a tragedy for Canada and an emotional shock for the people involved. There are some 1,700 farm families now threatened with foreclosure by the banks.

In 1979 agriculture was prospering with good crops and compensatory prices, so ambitious farmers borrowed to buy more land in order to widen their base and increase productivity. Then came poor crops and stagnating prices so borrowers could not even pay the interest, let alone the principal. Something must be done to protect these farmers who had no control over prices or weather. A mandatory moratorium is one possible solution.

The Farm Credit Corporation has advanced an even better plan. A company would be set up which could buy out a farmer in financial straits and then rent the farm back to the said farmer. The cash from the sale would reduce the debt burden. The farmer would receive 20 per cent of the sale price in common shares, making him a part owner and, through making a financial recovery, the farmer could buy back his land. This plan will not affect the credit of other farmers and is a free enterprise solution aimed at keeping the good farmers on the land. I commend the FCC and our Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) on this proposal and urge its initiation at the earliest possible time. Canada needs these farmers.

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● (1410)

THE ECONOMY

"DIALOGUE '86" CONFERENCE—NON PARTICIPATION BY GOVERNMENT

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, in March, 1985, the federal Government organized an economic conference to which it invited participants from business, labour, voluntary