

Oral Questions

• (1430)

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister for Indian and Northern Affairs, I will direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Yesterday, the Canadian Human Rights Commissioner released a scathing condemnation of the government's aboriginal policies. Is the minister prepared to admit the failure of this department and announce new policies to address the serious circumstances facing aboriginal peoples in Canada today?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, indeed the points brought forward by Mr. Yalden yesterday were addressed by the Prime Minister in the House on September 25 when he announced the new approach and the new relationship with Indian people in the country.

An hon. member: Right on.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, I will still address the Deputy Prime Minister. The government has failed in its fiduciary responsibilities to aboriginal Canadians.

Considering that Mr. Yalden recommends that the paternalistic and patronizing Indian Affairs department be dismantled, will the government take his advice and announce plans for a full scale inquiry, totally devoted to aboriginal issues?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the hon. member across whether or not that indeed is her party's position, to abolish the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The department acknowledged a long time ago the need to change the paternalistic approach of the Indian Act and of the department.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

An hon. member: Particularly under that government.

Mrs. Martin: Yes, under that government.

We have been working towards that. Today, 70 per cent of the funding that goes to our aboriginal peoples in the country is administered by the aboriginal people, not by the Department of Indian Affairs.

An hon. member: Right on.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. In the last week in my riding, in one week, one manufacturing plant moved to the United States, one company closed, one plant went into receivership, three companies announced lay-offs, and one company is winding down its operations. That is 330 jobs lost. There are several hundred part-time jobs gone and 120 workers laid off.

Will the minister change the free trade agreement in the agri-food industry? Will he change Tory financial policies and stop punishing Canadians with high interest rates and high dollar?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the solution probably lies not in changing the free trade agreement, but in changing the member.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: I can get up in the House and read—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: Is this a beer garden or is it the House of Commons?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: I can get up, Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.