

ment of Canada has no view. I think that should be left on the record as an indictment of the government and its failure to be sensitive to this issue which has gripped the country.

Senator Perrault: Hear, hear!

Senator MacEachen: Everyone has a view except the government, because it is afraid to state a view.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, let the record show that the full statement by my colleague, the Secretary of State, Mr. Bouchard, was that having recourse to the "notwithstanding" clause is a legitimate and legal act in the context of the present Constitution. I have said no less than that myself. To put it more simply, if there is an indictment to be made, let it be made about that great defender of human rights and freedoms, Pierre Trudeau, who accepted—

Senator Frith: Oh, oh! Do you believe it?

Senator Perrault: The Conservatives would love you.

Senator Murray: —who accepted the "notwithstanding" clause and put it there in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Senator Frith: Dr. Barootes, have you another Valium for your colleague?

Senator Barootes: Does it hurt?

Senator Molgat: Have you kept it in Meech Lake?

Senator Murray: Neither he nor anyone else should be astonished if a government has recourse to this provision of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Senator Frith: Just pathetic!

● (2150)

Senator MacEachen: It is interesting that so defenceless is the minister in explaining the policy of the government that he has to have recourse to an attack on Mr. Trudeau, a former Prime Minister. When Mr. Trudeau was in this chamber for five hours discussing the questions of Meech Lake and human rights, the Leader of the Government did not have the courage to attend so as to confront him directly. Senator Murray absented himself in order to conceal his lack of policy, yet he now attacks Trudeau in his absence. That is the courage of this government.

Senator Frith: Let the record show that.

AGRICULTURE

DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM—REQUEST FOR DETAILS

Hon. H.A. Olson: Honourable senators, I do not want to raise another question unless this one is exhausted—

Senator Barootes: Let's have one on farming.

Senator Olson: All right, I will give you one on farming—I have two or three others, too. I want to know what happened to the drought program that was announced by spokesmen for the government just two or three days before the election. No

money has yet been received; there is in place no program that we know of; we have heard of no criteria for qualifying for assistance and no formula by which to work it out.

I assume that the minister will have to take this question as notice, but I must say that this is a sad state of affairs. Grain producers, who have a vital interest in this matter, do not yet know whether they will qualify for assistance or, if so, for how much. I want to acknowledge that a program has been announced for livestock producers; but that is not the case for the grain producers.

When the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Mazankowski, was asked about this a few days ago, all he would say was that the government would honour its commitment. He gave absolutely no other details, so nobody knows what the program will be. Obviously the Leader of the Government has attended cabinet meetings. Can he tell us now whether he will provide us with at least a broad outline of the program, the criteria for qualification and the formula to be used in determining the payments to be made?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government, Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations and Acting Minister of Communications): Honourable senators, I shall do so.

UNITED NATIONS

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT GORBACHEV—CANADIAN RESPONSE

Hon. H.A. Olson: Honourable senators, there is one other important matter to which I want to call attention tonight, since this appears to be the only Question Period we will have this week. Will the Leader of the Government seek some information as to when Canada will respond to President Gorbachev's speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations, in which he outlined a number of extremely important initiatives? Although he did not mention any criteria or complementary action with respect to arms reduction, he announced that there is to be a unilateral action in that regard. I understand that the United States is in an awkward position since it is between administrations and because it is required, as a leader of the Western World, to consult with its allies before it does respond, but Canada is not in such a position. Canada has demonstrated a number of times in the past—not with the present government but with previous governments—that it can make a useful contribution by taking a leading role in dealing with some of these matters.

Mr. Gorbachev also put forward a comprehensive proposal by which to deal with the vexing problems we are encountering in our environment. He has offered the use of the U.S.S.R.'s space station to conduct monitoring of the environment under the auspices of the United Nations. When is Canada going to respond to these overtures? Opportunities are only out there for a limited time.

President Gorbachev also offered some constructive suggestions respecting the crushing debt load of the Third World countries. I think it is fair to say that many of us have waited for years in the hope that the leaders of the U.S.S.R. would propose the sorts of offers that were made by Mr. Gorbachev