

Oral Questions

The United States government is in the process of gutting the U.S. environmental protection agency, to the concern of many people not only in the United States but around the world, and now plans to gut the Clean Air Act and cut funding to research on Great Lakes water quality, something which will tamper with the treaty that is very important to both Canada and the United States in terms of keeping our Great Lakes water quality clean. Can the Prime Minister indicate whether he has communicated the concern of this House and Canadians to President Reagan regarding the direction the United States is going, and our serious concern about toxic wastes in the Great Lakes and about acid rain, or are we going to follow the policy of the United States and see the changing of our Clean Air Act and the gradual loss of the pollution controls we fought so hard to get in this country?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Madam Speaker, I did communicate those concerns, which are concerns of the government and this party, to the President.

ACID RAIN RESEARCH PROGRAM

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister would comment on the new acid rain strategy of his government which was revealed today. As a matter of fact, I will reveal it right now. It is the awarding of a \$30,691 contract to the University of Toronto to put concentrated acid rain into the eyes of rabbits in order to study acid rain. Does the Prime Minister think that will reduce acid rain, or will the new Liberal policy on acid rain be to provide goggles to all Canadian rabbits?

● (1450)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I will ask the hon. member to think about the answer. He might be able to find it himself.

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AVIATION INDUSTRY

FRENCH AIR BUS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. I would like to ask the Prime Minister if, during his recent meeting with President Mitterrand, the subject of French aviation air bus program was discussed and whether any possibility of transferring some of that program to Canada for the benefit of our aviation industry was considered? If there are any details, could the Prime Minister tell the House about them?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, as I responded in the House yesterday to a question about my discussions with President Mitterrand, I will repeat to the hon. member that the discussions were purely preparatory to the Summit, and they had to do with matters which are on the agenda of the Summit. Of course, the air bus is not one

such matter. However, the Prime Minister of France is arriving in Canada tomorrow, and we do intend to discuss this matter, amongst others, with him.

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AGRICULTURE

BLOCKADE BY FARMERS OF ONTARIO FOOD TERMINAL

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. The farm sector is experiencing increasing difficulties. In one recent sampling 25 per cent of the respondents were not able to plant their spring crops because of the difficulty in obtaining financing. In addition, 40 per cent felt they were financially bankrupt. Interest rates of over 16 per cent now apply to farm credit. The small business bond is not working. Indeed, this morning in Toronto a group of 200 farmers blockaded the Ontario Food Terminal because of the failure of the minister and his government to provide adequate solutions to the increasing number of problems. Was the minister aware of this blockade? Is he aware of the increasing difficulties in the agricultural sector, and is he prepared to do anything about them now?

Mr. Greenaway: Instead of talking through his green hat.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I was not made aware that a group of 200 farmers were at the Ontario Food Terminal.

The hon. member seems to make fun of the fact that the farm credit interest rate is 16.5 per cent. The hon. member for Lambton-Middlesex reported to me today that he has had meetings with farmers in his constituency. They are being asked to pay 30 per cent for money for farm operations this spring. These operations include spring planting and so forth.

The hon. member for Bruce-Grey knows very well that farm credit is for long-term money. We do not provide short-term money under those circumstances. Loans are made in respect of debt accumulation so that farmers can pay off their debts, but it is up to private lending institutions to make sure that money is available to farmers. First and foremost it is up to the province of Ontario to do something more than it is doing at the present time.

The hon. member also knows that we lent money interest free in Ontario last year, as well as in some other provinces. However, the bulk of the money went to Ontario. Nearly \$100 million in farm credit went to Ontario. In addition, Ontario farmers received some 40 per cent of the emergency funds we lent.

The hon. member tries to get across the idea that we do not care and are not doing anything, but he is wrong. We are very concerned about the problems farmers are facing, but as far as I am concerned those problems are strictly—maybe not strictly—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!