

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 14, 1988

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 21

[English]

DISASTERS

JAMAICA—DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY HURRICANE GILBERT

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, a tragedy of colossal proportions is unfolding on the Island of Jamaica as Hurricane Gilbert sweeps across the Caribbean. Early reports on television and what we have heard on the news indicate widespread destruction on the island, including houses, hospitals, schools, and places of employment. Indeed, I heard last night that the airport in Kingston which was built by Canadian engineering and partly by Canadian resources is totally destroyed.

We have to be conscious of Jamaica's problem as a fellow member of the Commonwealth and because the historic homeland of thousands and thousands of Canadian citizens is Jamaica.

● (1405)

So far, perhaps understandably, the Government has taken no action and made no gesture, waiting, I understand, to hear from the Minister's office exactly what type of assistance is required.

As soon as the dimensions of the tragedy are known, and as soon as it is possible to make any offer or any indication, I urge the Government to do so. Canadians will broadly support generosity toward Jamaica in this terrible hour of need.

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COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM

APPOINTMENT OF NEW BOARD URGED

Mr. Jim Jepson (London East): Mr. Speaker, the Court Challenges Program is a federal program that funds human rights cases, and is comprised of a government appointed committee that operates at arm's length from government.

The committee, in its wisdom, has stated that it has money to offer to two homosexual lovers who wish to prove that homosexuals are discriminated against and deserve special protection under the Charter. The committee also awarded \$25,000 to an Ottawa-based homosexual rights group, EGAL, to research five areas in the Immigration Act that would lead to other court challenges on gay rights.

The Court Challenges Program recently gave LEAF, a feminist action group, \$35,000 to defray its expenses as interventionists in the Borowski trial on fetal rights, yet denied REAL Women the same amount to defray their expenses as interventionists in the same trial. This is not democracy in action, but a clear case of discrimination. I urge the Minister of State to cancel these committee appointments and appoint a new board that will operate in a fair and equitable fashion.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

POSSIBLE INCREASE IN FEDERAL TAX—IMPACT

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, a document published yesterday by the *Association des constructeurs d'habitations du Québec* and the Canadian Home Builders' Association explains that because of the hidden agenda of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), and especially to his federal sales tax, the average cost of a house in Canada would increase by \$8,000.

Mr. Speaker, this measure is a direct contradiction of the right to adequate housing, and if we analyse the Minister's proposal in greater detail, we find as well that monthly rents will increase by an estimated \$65.

Mr. Speaker, tax reform would have the effect of denying thousands of Canadians the right to accommodation, and it would also deny thousands of young couples the right to own property.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the Minister of Finance will have the courage to do what he did in the case of the tax on food and give us the assurance that this tax which puts an extra \$8,000 on houses and \$65 per month more on rental accommodation will not be implemented and that there will be a special exemption for the housing sector.