

CANADIAN REPRESENTATIONS

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, is the Secretary of State for External Affairs telling us that he himself has not spoken to the Russian Ambassador about this incident? Can he also tell the House whether steps are being taken to protect Canadian journalists in the Soviet Union against harassment of this type?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, excuse me, this is a rare difficulty I have in the House of Commons, as Hon. Members will know.

Mr. Axworthy: Being choked up?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): No, I am rarely choked up.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I have not seen the Soviet Ambassador myself. I instructed officials to do that this morning because I thought it urgent that it be done immediately. I was not in a position to see him myself, and it was done urgently. My impression is that he was not informed or advised of the circumstances. He is seeking information which he will give to us. We will take every action that is necessary, including every precaution that is available to us, to protect not only the safety but, more important, the rights of Canadian journalists in the Soviet Union.

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AGRICULTURE

REQUEST FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF DEFICIENCY PAYMENT FOR FARMERS

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister knows that due to low prices grain and corn producers throughout Canada are facing the most devastating year since the 1930s. Prairie Premiers have been calling for a deficiency payment for months. Can the Minister say when the Government will announce a deficiency payment?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Government is well aware of the economic problems facing the Canadian farmer. The Government has always stood by the Canadian farmer, and we intend to do so in the future.

SITUATION OF GRAIN FARMERS

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture talked about sparing no effort. What the farmers want to know is when the Government will spare over \$1 billion for a deficiency payment.

Last month the Government was able to find over \$1 billion for 25 of the largest oil companies in Canada. Why can the Government not find the money for a deficiency payment for

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140,000 grain farmers who are facing not only the loss of their farms but the loss of their homes and their livelihoods? Prices in Canada are half what they are in the United States due to the deficiency payment system in place in that country.

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am not so sure from where the Hon. Member obtains his information or his idea that we have denied the implementation of a deficiency payment. Before the House adjourned for the summer recess we said, in response to questions posed primarily by members of the New Democratic Party that, indeed, a deficiency payment was an option. I am sure the Hon. Member is aware that ensuring fairness and equity when making some type of compensation payment is a very complicated and complex issue. If the Hon. Member understands the complications, then I am sure he will realize that it will not be dealt with fairly and equitably simply by means of a deficiency payment but, rather, that it might take a program made up of three or four parts.

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PENITENTIARIES

CONSTRUCTION OF PRISON IN PORT-CARTIER

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. This morning Canadians learned that the Prime Minister announced the building of the prison in Port-Cartier, which is in his riding, two weeks before the decision was approved by his colleagues in Treasury Board. In view of the fact that the Prime Minister has said that this was a government decision, when will he admit that every Canadian knows that this was but a blatant pork-barrelling move to his riding undertaken following the direct involvement of himself and his office?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to answer my hon. colleague's question. As the Hon. Member clearly indicated, the announcement was made on June 18. It was an announcement of government policy. A policy decision which was fully consistent with over-all government policy, and fully consistent with the Correctional Services capital budget, had been taken. It came to Treasury Board for the required approval of detailed estimates of cost. That approval was granted on July 3 on a preliminary basis and it was given effective project approval on April 10, 1986, which is very normal in capital projects of this type.

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER APPEAR BEFORE COMMITTEE

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, what the Minister is saying is that the Government is prepared to spend \$60 million of Canadian funds without it being authorized in advance by the Treasury Board. That is pretty shameful.