

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I know the Minister can be briefer than that.

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● (1450)

SOCIAL SECURITY

REQUEST FOR FULL INDEXATION OF FAMILY ALLOWANCE

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, in view of the extra burden of higher taxes which the Minister is imposing upon families, the higher food costs resulting from his economic policies—and of course these are increasing the cost of living for all families with children—will the Minister take steps to reindex the family allowance and the child tax credit to the real cost of family living?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has never really understood what we were doing with the changes in the family benefits. There are three elements of the family benefits package. The child tax exemption, which is a benefit to upper-income Canadians, was reduced. The child tax credit, which is a benefit to lower-income Canadians, was increased. We have also modified the indexation of the family benefit. However, the net effect of those three changes is to help low-income Canadians and to take that money away from upper-income Canadians. Surely that is good social policy.

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[Translation]

FORESTRY

SAWMILLS—IMPACT OF FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. Marc Ferland (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State (Forestry).

The experts say that the lumber industry had a very good year in 1985, the result of an impressive 18.5 per cent increase in construction starts.

Could the Minister inform the House whether the Opposition is right when it sees negotiations to improve our trade with the United States as a threat to the industry?

[English]

Hon. Gerald S. Merrithew (Minister of State (Forestry)): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the continued interest and concern of the Hon. Member, and indeed of other Hon. Members, in the forest products trade issue. Of course the fact of the matter is that lumber presently trades freely between Canada and the United States, to the extent where we have now captured about a third of its market. Naturally that might be expected to create and spur protectionist sentiments, which it has, despite the fact that Canada has not provided any subsidies. That has been proven by two United States studies.

It is my view that freer enhanced trade with the United States will serve to offset or ameliorate these—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ACID RAIN—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. From the 1986-87 Environment Canada Estimates we learn with shock that the Minister has changed the policy on acid rain. Until now the Government wanted to reduce acid rain causing emissions. In this year's Estimates, instead, we learn that the Government wants to reduce the effects of acid rain on the environment.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is several statements. A question, please.

Mr. Caccia: Why has this backward step been taken on the eve of the summit meeting in Washington between the Prime Minister and President Reagan?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Hon. Member for Davenport, he does not know what he is talking about.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Caccia: Read your own Estimates.

Mr. McMillan: This Government has done more on the acid rain issue in 18 months in office than the Liberal Party did in 18 years in Government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MAPLE TREES

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, rather than this junk, perhaps the Minister of the Environment will give us a serious answer. As a result of the policy change in his own Estimates, does he intend to equip every maple tree in the country with an acid rain umbrella?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, is the Hon. Member not aware of the fact that the Government has set aside \$300 million for acid rain abatement, \$150 million of which will be directly related to the abatement of acid rain through companies? Does he not realize that we have signed a general agreement with all eastern Canadian provinces to reduce by 50 per cent acid rain causing emissions by 1994, based upon 1980 figures? Does he not realize that I am about to sign individual agreements with Ontario, Quebec, and other relevant provinces? During the time when he was Minister of the Environment, he was not able to get one agreement, let alone seven.