

Oral Questions

What meanness will not commit those who want to break up Canada to return to the bad old days? What outrageous remarks are they not prepared to profer to return to an era they look upon with nostalgia?

Mr. Speaker, I say that the Hon. Members who represent the Liberal Party in this House, but especially the Hon. Member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Mal-épart) and the Hon. Member for LaSalle—Émard (Mr. Martin), an aspiring leadership candidate, should rise and denounce such statements from one of theirs.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

CUT-BACKS IN PROGRAMS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister certainly shows lack of judgment by agreeing to be honoured for his environmental work by people who are against acid rain controls, the very day when and in the same city where he is supposed to convince the Americans of the need to reduce acid rain.

Still my question is directed to the Minister of Finance who, like the Prime Minister, makes lofty pronouncements on environmental issues and then axes programs of vital importance for the environment.

How can the Minister of Finance justify the cancellation of the national energy saving and alternate energy program? How can he justify the closing of the federal Government's twelve renewable energy offices? How can he justify the decision not to renew the reforestation agreements in this country?

[*English*]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the right hon. gentleman. I did not catch the entire question. If it is in relation to CREOs, yes, the Government took an examination on reduction in EMR and the research and development can go forward. That was being done in respect to alternate energy. There were a number of programs within the CREOs which we felt, now that they were transferred to Industry, was sufficient. It was for

that reason, along with deficit reduction, that they were reduced or cut.

ELIMINATION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAM

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to interrupt the briefing between the Minister and the Minister of Finance, but I can understand the Minister limply getting to his feet to reply to a question that the Minister of Finance should have taken responsibility for, but I admire his frankness.

What has happened here is that we have had four and a half years of cuts in the Department of the Environment, and now a partial restoration, but other Departments such as his own, Energy, Mines and Resources, have been brutally cut.

We have heard this all before. Since he has been the Minister of Finance—and I would again like to address the question to him—he has eliminated the program to help remote communities develop environmentally safe sources of energy. He has eliminated a program to help Canadians insulate their homes. He has eliminated the Atlantic Energy Conservation Program among others. Now the Minister is shutting down the alternative energy program and the renewable energy offices altogether. How can anyone take the Prime Minister down to accept that environmental award in the United States? How can we take the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister seriously when, after four and a half years, they have eliminated every program for renewable energy in Canada, programs that are essential if we are to clean up our environment and preserve our resources?

• (1420)

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, what the right hon. gentleman has said is not accurate. I think he should applaud the recognition the Prime Minister is getting for the leadership he has been giving with respect to the environment. He has been receiving recognition, as did the former Minister of the Environment, from various international organizations. About the only place he is not getting that recognition is from the opposition benches.

If the hon. gentleman were to look at the Estimates for the environment, he would find that there has been a substantial increase year over year. I believe the increase is about 9.4 per cent. It is an increase rather than a reduction. I want to make the former Finance Minister understand that very clearly. As well, research in alternate energy is going forward. The right hon. member