

Oral Questions

exempt itself from the very requirements it is going to put on everybody else?

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of Forestry): Mr. Speaker, I had to assume that my hon. friend was in the House often enough to know that the minister, on many occasions, pointed out that the environmental assessment legislation is in the final stages of preparation and will be introduced in the House, hopefully before we recess for the summer less than a month from now.

Surely the hon. member can have patience. She should restrain from making negative comments until she sees what is being tabled.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Latest Statistics Canada figures show that from 1986 to 1989 the Canadian dollar rose some 16 per cent against the U.S. dollar, making Canadian purchases in the United States increasingly lower in price. During that same time, the number of Canadians travelling to the United States on same-day visits surged by 54 per cent. The correlation of a high Canadian dollar to this surging exodus of Canadian consumers is not merely coincidence.

Is the minister prepared to acknowledge that the Bank of Canada's high interest rate policy, which has artificially inflated the value of the Canadian dollar, has in fact driven Canadian consumers south of the border causing severe haemorrhaging to our national economy?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to debate the point that the hon. member has made. However, the hon. member has to consider the alternatives. Do we let inflation just run away with itself? Do we ignore the problems of increased unit labour costs that are going to undermine our competitive position as a country? Do we ignore the fact that that is going to cost us jobs which will cost us business and result in a much less healthy economy? These are the questions that one has to consider when

one makes these bald, very narrow minded statements about the impact of the Canadian dollar.

It is important to understand the reasons behind the policies that the government is following. Our policies are designed to improve the health of the Canadian economy, which health has been demonstrated over the last five and a half years as Canada has been second only to Japan in economic growth in the major industrialized countries.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is about the same question but is directed to the Minister of Agriculture.

A case in point is that British Columbia dairy farmers are losing more than \$20 million a year due to B.C. residents buying inexpensive milk products in the United States. In the Okanagan Valley alone, the loss is approximately \$2 million a year.

In light of our high interest rates and our over-valued Canadian dollar, what steps is the Minister of Agriculture prepared to take to curtail this loss to the dairy industry in particular resulting from Canadian purchases of U.S. products?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, this is a matter that has been looked into by a task force. An assessment has been made in the province of British Columbia, one has been made in the province of New Brunswick, and one is being completed in Ontario. It is hoped that when all this data is gathered we will be able to sit down with the industry to see if in fact any steps can be taken.

I want to remind the hon. member that if there was to be a severe tightening up at border checkpoints, it would cause a great deal of congestion. Those are the kinds of things that would have to be taken into account. I do take the hon. member's representation seriously and, as I have indicated, we are acting in that regard.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. The