

*Oral Questions*

refuses to tell us how much his government is willing to spend makes me very leery.”

Yet, yesterday and again this morning on television, the Minister of the Environment said: “Yes, we have a commitment on the level of funding”.

Will the minister tell us today exactly what that commitment is, exactly how much money the government has put aside for further environmental action? Does he not realize that if he will not give us that exact figure today, he is telling Canadians that the exercise of consultation which he wants them to take part in is nothing more than a sham, a smoke screen to hide the fact the government does not intend to do anything meaningful on the environment?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I would refer my hon. friend to the passage in the budget speech where I clearly state that the Minister of the Environment would be putting forward a major document in an agenda for sustainable development. That document was put forward by the minister yesterday. It is a statement of consultation. It states that we want to listen very carefully to what Canadians have to say, be they other levels of government, members of the private sector, both from the NGOs and the industry, from individual Canadians. We want to listen to Canadians before we make these final decisions.

I think it is very clear from what I have read from a number of observers of the environment scene that consultation is desired, consultation is needed. There are changes that we are going to have to undergo in our lives, there are changes that industry will have to undergo. It is important that we have a degree of consultation so that we get the right environmental agenda package put together. That is leadership on the part of this government.

If he checks the budget papers he will see that we have set aside reserves to take account of emergencies that are facing us today in the fishery and agriculture. There are also very real needs in the environment. So we do have reserves set aside to take account of the expenditures which will have to be made.

• (1120)

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, Michael Manolson, Executive Director of Greenpeace Canada, said the paper is, “an excuse for inaction”. Kai Millyard, of Friends of the Earth, talking

about the paper, said, “What a lot of baloney. They look like they are trying to buy time.”

The reserves the minister is talking about have been already committed to dealing with the crisis in the fishery, the crisis in agriculture, and now he is saying that same magic amount is going to be used to deal with the needs of the environment.

I do not see how Canadians can take that statement seriously, unless the Minister of Finance gets up today and gives us a specific amount. If Canadians do not have a specific amount I do not see how they are going to feel that the opinions the government is soliciting are going to be meaningful or taken seriously.

I ask the Minister of Finance, why the secrecy? What is the government hiding, or is it really trying to hide the fact that the government has no intention of doing anything new and meaningful on the environment?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I have an article here which talks about what Ottawa's green plan must include. It is an article by Mr. Donald Gamble, a leading expert on Canadian water policy. His final point is on consensus building: “Confrontation on environmental issues must not continue to frustrate progress toward a sustainable future. Consultation processes point the way for industry and government and how industry and government can co-operate.”

Sustainable development means that there must be co-operation on the part of industry with government, with other interested parties in the private sector, so that together we can move ahead and make some real progress to build on the progress that was clearly in place in our efforts to improve the environment in our last mandate.

Now the hon. member is saying he wants to have a precise figure. If we have a precise figure, that can constrain what the consultations will actually provide. We want to listen to these consultations, respond to them in an effective way, and in that way build the consensus that will allow us to move forward in a strong future of sustainable development.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the article from which the Minister of Finance quoted was written and published before the government's framework for discussion came out. It would be interesting to know what the author had to say about this meaningless document now that he has had a chance to read it. I doubt if he would have anything slightly positive