

S.O. 21

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

APPOINTMENT OF NEW HEAD OF U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AGENCY

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Madam Speaker, yesterday it was reported that President Reagan had appointed as head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency the man who had been its original administrator at its founding 12 years ago, Mr. William Ruckelshaus. I am sure that all of us who have a deep and critical interest in environmental matters welcome this appointment.

As you know from my many interventions in the House, Madam Speaker, environmental concerns, particularly the question of acid rain, are of pressing importance in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. For this reason I have repeatedly urged the reconstitution of our own Subcommittee on Acid Rain, a step which this House saw fit to take last week. So now we have, on both sides of the border, a strengthening of the forces pressing for a resolution of these problems. I and my constituents take great satisfaction in this, Madam Speaker.

I want to commend the Minister responsible for his past efforts, and I want to call upon him to take advantage of these factors which have so quickly changed what had seemed to be a situation of deadlock. It is my hope that he will be meeting with the new head of the EPA in person in the very near future so that progress may be made toward what is, I am sure, our common goal of cleaner air and water all across our common continent of North America.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

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● (1410)

WELFARE

FEDERAL PAYMENTS TO NATIVE PEOPLE IN MANITOBA

Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake): Just recently, Madam Speaker, I received a letter from the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Munro). In his letter, which was in reply to one I had sent him, the Minister outlined his policy regarding welfare payments to native people under the Canada Assistance Plan. This plan is cost-shared by the provincial and federal Governments with announcements on increases made by provincial officials.

By law, federal Government adjustments to native people receiving welfare must be made within two months of provincial adjustments. At the beginning of this year, welfare recipients in Manitoba received increases ranging from 7 per cent to 29 per cent based on the size of the family and the ages of children in that family. These increases became effective January 1 for everyone, except native people, who did not receive increases until March 1.

In reply to my question the Minister said that these increases will not be provided retroactively to cover the two-

month period because of "the extensive work entailed in affecting rate changes". What this means in human terms is that native people, whose cheques are administered by the Winnipeg DIAND office, are being denied money paid to every other welfare recipient in the Province. I was extremely disappointed to learn the Minister's position on retroactivity.

We have heard a lot in recent weeks about the Government's desire to bargain in good faith with native people on constitutional matters. Those are important matters, Madam Speaker, but I would like to know when the Government and this particular Minister intend to act in good faith on bread and butter issues such as this one.

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AGRICULTURE

CALL FOR MINISTER'S RESIGNATION

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, Canadian agriculture is facing its most severe crisis in the history of Canada. Thousands of farmers have suffered forced sales and bankruptcies due to the crushing squeeze of soaring fuel costs, feed costs, and interest rates, against reduced prices for their goods. There is real concern about the continuing viability of the industry as a whole.

My Party has urged the Government to provide relief for our farmers by way of improving capital gains tax legislation, interest rate subsidies, agribonds, exemption from the excise tax on farm fuels, and a moratorium on foreclosures. Every suggestion falls on deaf ears. This Government has offered absolutely no relief for farmers and no hope for the agricultural industry.

My colleagues, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), the Hon. Member for Kindersley-Lloydminster (Mr. McKnight), the Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger), the Hon. Member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers), and the Hon. Member for Pembina (Mr. Elzinga), have repeatedly requested action from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan).

Dairy farmers in northern Alberta have lost their market share quota, in many cases through no fault of their own, and are being heavily penalized to the extent of \$28 per hectolitre for any production outside the market share quota. This is affecting almost 40 per cent of the producers in Northern Alberta. The Minister was asked to try to alleviate this problem by making recommendations to his Department. The Minister again abdicated his responsibilities to Canadian farmers and chose to ignore the problems of the very people he is supposed to represent in Cabinet.

It has become obvious that the Minister should resign and should be replaced by someone who is genuinely—

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please.