

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale kindly address the Chair on the question of the urgency of debate?

Mr. Rapp: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of great urgency because, since November 1 of last year the price of farm machinery has increased greatly, from \$250 for a small combine to \$600 for a large combine, while at the same time final payments on wheat this year are 17 cents a bushel less than last year. In addition, the prices being received by farmers for hogs, eggs and everything that the farmer sells have gone down. Let me remind the house that the president of the Cockshutt Farm Equipment of Canada Limited only three or four days ago at the official opening of an agency in Saskatoon stressed the fact that the cost of farm machinery will go up within the next three to five years.

The urgency of the matter lies in the fact that farmers at the present time have no money to buy this expensive farm equipment because on the one hand the price they receive for their produce is going down while on the other hand the cost of this type of equipment is going up. In 1962 a standing committee of this house investigated farm machinery prices. When the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene) travelled throughout the west he said it was his intention to set up another committee to look into this situation. I suggest it is now too late for such an investigation because the situation has become too serious and much damage has already been done.

As an alternative I would suggest to the minister that a commission of inquiry be set up to look into this problem. After all, we set up an inquiry into almost anything that takes place in this country. Why should we not set up an inquiry to investigate this situation? Many professors of agriculture and farm management are available to carry out an investigation into the increasing costs of farm machinery and could then provide recommendations in respect of which the minister could act accordingly.

This whole situation has become extremely serious and the problem now facing farmers throughout Canada relates, as the minister pointed out when he was out west, to the high cost of farm machinery. At almost every place the minister spoke he said he was going to do something in an attempt to alleviate the situation. Since then almost six months have

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elapsed but the minister has done nothing in this regard.

I should like to see the house debate this matter and come to the conclusion that a royal commission or a one-man inquiry should be established to consider this serious problem which now faces the agricultural industry.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, the members of this party would like to support the contention that there is urgency of debate in the matter which has been brought to our attention by the hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale (Mr. Rapp). Throughout this country in the course of the next few weeks farmers will be going on the land and in the course of the next few months many of them will have to purchase new equipment or pay for repairs to old machinery. It seems to me to be most important that this house have a discussion about the very serious and considerable increase in the cost of farm equipment in the last few months.

This whole matter is related to the question which I tried to bring before this house last year regarding the increase in the price of steel, because the increase in the cost of farm machinery is an inevitable consequence of that increase. Farmers are now caught in a cost-price squeeze and this house must give some consideration to the matter.

A debate on this subject today will not bring down the price of farm machinery but it would enable the government to state what it proposes to do about the matter, whether it proposes to have a complete investigation into the price of farm machinery to ascertain whether or not the increases have been justifiable or warranted or to say whether it proposes to set up a house committee to look into the matter. It would give the government the opportunity of outlining what action, if any, it proposes to take. I think the farmers of this country are entitled to know, first, that the House of Commons is concerned and, second, whether the government is going to act or continue to drift and allow the situation to go from bad to worse.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, the question raised by the hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale (Mr. Rapp) is certainly definite, since it concerns the adjournment of the house under standing order 26 for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance, that is