

*Action Concerning Farm Machinery Prices*

**Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie):** Mr. Speaker, I realize this is Holy Week and it is customary for those in the habit of doing so to make confessions. There are two types of sins which one usually confesses, sins of omission and sins of commission. This government is guilty of the sin of omission. In presenting this report the government has indicated there is nothing positive it can report at this time.

The same week that the Barber report was presented the Minister of Agriculture indicated he was already taking steps to consult with the machinery companies; yet he does not have any positive statement to make at this time. The minister has no encouragement for those farmers who have already purchased or may be purchasing farm machinery at prices which the Barber Commission indicated were high. The minister has not indicated that there have been consultations with regard to financing.

It is indicated in the fourth paragraph of the minister's statement that two or three machinery companies have shown interest in the Canadian market. I am not excited about the minister reporting that to the House at this late date because I read a report to that effect in the newspapers three or four weeks ago. Had the minister come into the House and stated that he had had discussions with the Minister of Finance who in turn had consulted with the banks and that the banks had indicated they would maintain a moratorium on the present rate of interest instead of advancing it from 5 per cent to 8½ per cent, I would feel that some positive action had been taken. However, he did nothing of the sort. If the minister had told us that the machinery companies, which finance much of the machinery sold, were prepared to lower their interest rates or to grant a moratorium on payments for machinery, I would have felt there was some positive action. He did nothing of the sort. In other words, there has been no commitment from any of the manufacturers at this time.

The minister stated that some foreign machinery companies will be entering the Canadian market. However, this will not help the dairy farmer in the east nor the prairie wheat farmer at this time. Everybody knows that a system of dealerships must be set up. If that is done, established dealers will go by the board.

Financing must be dealt with. What will happen with regard to trade-ins? Will these dealerships be prepared to accept trade-ins?

[Mr. Olson.]

What is going to be the value of the machines that may be purchased? In my experience I find that a machine bought on a short-term basis usually depreciates very rapidly. I can only say I am sorry that the time of the House has to be taken to listen to that type of report by the Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar):** Mr. Speaker, the minister said he was pleased to report that the government has taken and is continuing to take positive action in respect of six of the recommendations of Dr. Barber. I have checked those recommendations. Among other things the report recommended that the companies concerned, particularly those with European sources of supply, should be asked whether they are prepared to establish prices in Canada more in line with those in Europe. The minister in his statement did not mention any discussions with these suppliers and the co-operation or lack of co-operation that he may have been offered by the companies who were charged in this report with mulcting the Canadian consumer.

This statement does not deal effectively with recommendation No. 3, which reads:

It should ask the Combines Investigation Branch to review the findings of this report and discuss them with the counterparts in the United...and other countries, with a view to possible action.

This statement does not deal effectively been done in this regard. It does not cover the very considerable field of repair parts. Evidence was given to the commission that excessive prices were being charged for repairs and repair parts compared with the cost of parts and the repairing of other automotive equipment such as cars.

Surely it is within the competence of this government to have the Department of Justice, under the Combines Investigation Act, institute action at the national level on this matter in view of the fact that millions of dollars worth of farm machinery in this country must be repaired. This problem will not be solved simply by going to Czechoslovakia or some other place in Europe to import machines. This effort may be laudable in itself, and the more power to the minister and the government if they can find other sources of machines and bring them in so that the farmer will be at a better advantage in purchasing machines. But I do say that not enough action is being taken against the machinery companies which have been and will continue to take advantage of the farmer unless there is positive action to prevent them from doing so.