

any steps were being taken to clarify the conflicting statements emanating from the Barber commission investigating prices of farm machinery respecting profits achieved by the manufacturing companies. In its interim report it says that the farm machinery companies were making "handsome profits". In the final report it has watered this statement down to read "moderate profits". It seems to me incredible that the commission would entirely reverse its stand on such an important issue as profits in the farm machinery industry. The assumption, rightly or wrongly, has bothered the consumers who in this case are mainly farmers. So far as I am concerned, the credibility of the commission has been entirely destroyed.

During the controversy which developed after the commission released its interim report, Massey-Ferguson and other manufacturers operating in Canada were accused of making handsome profits and words such as "conspiracy" and "confiscation" were freely used. Massey-Ferguson elected to challenge this statement and in press releases and in direct submissions to the royal commission the company denied it was making the handsome profits alleged by the commission chairman.

The company challenged the commission to take another responsible look at the figures which it had shown to the commission when it first appeared before it. Clearly, from that point onward the battle-lines were drawn and it was a royal commission against one of the giant conglomerates. It now appears from the final report that the victor has been Massey-Ferguson. If this is not the case, then I suggest that the government owes an immediate and direct apology and retraction to Massey-Ferguson and to all other producers of farm machinery in Canada—certainly, if not from the government at least from the chairman of the commission.

The royal commission, and by inference the government, are not strengthening the investor's or the public's faith in the Canadian economy by making suggestions of this nature. The Credibility of the commission has been badly damaged. The situation must receive clarification if the government expects the people of this country to have any faith in the policy proposals which will flow from the contents of this report.

If this matter is not cleared up, the people of Canada have produced and paid for a stale, outdated \$1.5 million whitewash job which they can sorely afford at this time. I am using the figure \$1.5 million because that was the cost of the commission inquiry as of last December. It is probably reasonable to assume that the cost has been increased since the writing of the final report, so probably we are dealing with a figure in the order of \$2 million.

If the government is going to appoint a body to prepare a report for the country, particularly the farmers, to digest and consider it has a responsibility both to the commission and, in this particular case, to the farm machinery interests to clarify the statements that have been made. If the first assertion was hastily conceived, the report should say so. If the strength of the Massey-

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Ferguson case has caused a rearrangement of the figures, then the whole report is worthless.

The government is charged with the grave and weighty responsibility of running the affairs of the country. If it fails to set the record straight and establish some facts, it is derelict, perhaps even negligent in its duty to the country's corporate and private citizens. During these times of economic and social strife it would behoove the government to set a pattern which the country can effectively follow. The whole country has been cast adrift by statements and misinformation of this nature. The government has left it to wallow in a sea of mud mixed by confused chefs across the way. Hopefully, when the *maitre d'* returns the people of Canada will be able to get answers to some of these problems.

Mr. Bruce Howard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) asked a two-part question today, the first part directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) and the second part to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson). I came prepared to discuss it this evening on the basis of the part directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

I was rather surprised at the strong words used in the member's statement this evening, condemning the government on its stand on a report when the report has only just come out: it just arrived on my desk yesterday. It is a very thick volume and I must confess that I have not yet had time to read it from cover to cover. I am a little surprised that the hon. member has had time to read and digest it thoroughly. There is a brief summary of the report—

• (10:20 p.m.)

Mr. Mazankowski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There is no provision for a point of order at this time.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): Before the hon. member seeks the headlines, I think he would want to study the matter thoroughly.

Mr. Mazankowski: Read the press release.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that a brief summary is not the same as the whole report.

Mr. Mazankowski: It is pretty concise.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): I have read some parts of the chapter on pricing and I find it most interesting that the report does not say that the farm machinery companies make excessive profits, but it does say that perhaps the market strategy used in placing the machinery on sales floors for periods of a year and a half to two years was an expensive one. It points out very clearly,