

(Mr. Thacker) accuses us of not liking farmers. I may remind the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills, if he would listen for a minute—

An Hon. Member: He doesn't know how!

Mr. Garneau: I had a chance to visit his riding not long ago, where I even met dozens of sugar beet producers in Lethbridge—

Mr. Boudria: And Taber!

● (1420)

Mr. Garneau: —and Taber . . . who were very concerned about what was happening in the farming sector. And if anyone here does not seem to be concerned, and, to speak with the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills, doesn't like farmers or doesn't want to support them, I may remind the Hon. Member that he would be better off looking after the sugar beet producers in his riding who are out of work. That enormous plant that is usually a hive of activity at this time of the year is now empty. Dead. Nothing is happening. And what are farmers asking this Government to do? They are asking this Government to take a stand and to pay the money they owe these farmers according to plans known and approved by the Government and by all farm producers. How come the Government decided unilaterally not to pay these subsidies? That is one of the questions the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills should have answered, if he was so concerned about the interests of farm producers, and especially sugar beet producers, because that was one of the issues brought to our attention and discussed at length. At this plant, not only are sugar beet producers completely idle, not only are they in dire financial straits, but in addition, this plant that employed hundreds of people now only employs a few units to do the usual winter maintenance work. Mr. Speaker, this is appalling, and I think the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker) would be the last person to make the kind of comments he made in this House. I believe today's debate is entirely justified, because since April 1, we have had a report before the House that has been adopted unanimously by all Members, with both regular and substitute Members numbering Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats in their ranks. For example, I see that a number of Conservative Members were in attendance, including the Hon. Member for Cardigan (Mr. Binns), the Hon. Member for Essex-Kent (Mr. Caldwell), the Hon. Member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Clark), the Hon. Member for Mégantic-Compton-Stanstead (Mr. Gérin), the Hon. Member for Trois-Rivières (Mr. Vincent), the Hon. Member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. Wilson), and the Hon. Member for Bellechasse (Mr. Blais) as substitute member, therefore representatives from all regions, many from the Conservative Party, some NDP Members, and Liberals as well. This report, Mr. Speaker, which was tabled in the House on April 1—

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An Hon. Member: It was unanimous.

Mr. Garneau: —and which was unanimously adopted by all Parties, what did it recommend? There were eight specific propositions in the report, and some of them concerned the matter of loans to farmers, for example, agri-bonds as they are called, offered to investors on special terms.

Some propositions had to do with the Farm Credit corporation, others were about capital gains, and I would just as soon have spoken to the motion rather than take part in the main debate because that motion is as hypocritical as they come, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Right on.

Mr. Garneau: Yesterday the Chair admitted that the word "hypocrisy" was not out of order, but this one is really unacceptable because, as we are about to recommend a reference to committee to consider the impact or advantage of the \$500,000 capital gains tax exemption, we are faced with a ways and means motion introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) in which he announced a new minimum tax on capital gains, yet they were supposed to be exempt as a result of the May 23 Budget. It was announced with fanfare on May 23, and Conservative Members proudly said: This was one of our election promises, a \$500,000 exemption on the sale of a farm. Well, Mr. Speaker, we found out later on that the \$500,000 exemption was available to anyone, not just farmers, so that a bona fide farmer aged 30 who intends to sell his farm when he gets to be 65 will have financial operations like any other worker. He can have capital gains on his investments, and after reaching 65, when he sells his farm, if he has already taken his \$500,000 capital gains tax exemption, he will no longer be eligible in spite of what our colleagues opposite tried to suggest during the whole budget debate, and more recently, after the announcement made by the Minister of Finance in this House. Indeed, I would like to suggest to farmers who want to sell their farm to do it right now, before December 31, because if they sell before that date and have a capital gain, they will not have to pay any taxes, but if they sell after January 1, they will have to pay the 12.5 per cent minimum tax.

Some Hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Garneau: The Government will provide a tax benefit with one hand and take it back with the other. When the Government says that the farmers will benefit or when the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills tells us that we should reconsider the report to determine whether it would be better to grant a capital gains tax exemption of \$500,000—

An Hon. Member: Instead of \$400,000.

Mr. Garneau: —instead of the \$400,000 exemption recommended in the report, I find it completely ridiculous that this is