

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

became available is wrong. Further, he might pay attention to what was said by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) to the effect that this bill is not yet complete. With the bribery that is going on in the other place and the legislation that will be brought forward in the new year, he doesn't know what he is talking about.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

RESEARCH—FARM MACHINERY—ASSISTANCE TO PRAIRIE PROVINCES IN ESTABLISHING TESTING CENTRE

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, a short while ago I raised a question with the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Gillespie) asking if he would use his influence with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) to carry out some research and development with respect to farm machinery. He replied that he would look into the matter. Since I wanted to make sure that he would, I arranged to debate the matter on the "late show."

The Barber report suggests several things, but I shall begin by quoting something that is fact in this regard:

The commission was also asked to examine "the present and prospective competitive position of the Canadian agricultural machinery industry in Canadian and export markets" and to recommend "measures that could contribute to the expansion of efficient production of agricultural machinery." At the present time the Canadian share of farm machinery manufacturing in North America, about 7 to 8 per cent, is well below Canada's proportion of the region's farm machinery sales, around 12 per cent.

It is my basic contention that something should be done about that problem. To use the words of the Barber report at page 11—

• (10:00 p.m.)

The basic proposal being made is for a comparatively small (compared to such a body as the National Research Council) but highly expert research and evaluation unit controlled by a semi-independent governing board. The unit would have its own program of research designed to improve farm machinery. In addition it would be responsible for a greatly expanded program of research grants to Canadian universities. This would ensure a continuing flow of farm machinery technology suited to the needs of Canadian farms.

Then on page 12 we find this passage:

Thus the expanded program of research into farm machinery technology recommended above should give a valuable stimulus to the growth of farm machinery production in Canada. Small independent firms will benefit from the flow of new ideas generated by this research and from the availability of a larger number of qualified agricultural engineers in government research stations and at universities. The larger firms would be encouraged to locate more of their own research in Canada because of the much more favourable milieu that had been created for farm machinery research. And this should lead, in time, to an expansion in their manufacturing output in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the argument has been that the innovative process has been carried out frequently by small manufacturing firms. The reason I suggest an approach of this

[Mr. MacInnis.]

nature is that often these people cannot afford the cost entailed. I should like to read from the report again, page 147, as follows:

The company that fails to improve its products at frequent intervals may find its market share declining sharply . . .

Changes in market share have often been very large within a few years. While not conclusive, these changes strongly support the view that product improvement is an extremely important competitive factor in the industry.

In his report, Professor Barber puts forward arguments in support of his point of view, and since that time he has also done this in Saskatchewan. The prairie governments are presently looking at such a testing agency. My suggestion to the Minister of State for Science and Technology is that he should also look at this testing agency in view of Professor Barber's comments and recommendations on this problem. We should consider, too, that this royal commission was an agency of the Liberal government, which must have been concerned or it would not have spent the money.

If a testing unit is not the best thing, then I suggest it is up to the present government and the minister, and perhaps also to the Minister of Agriculture, to suggest something better. I contacted a company in regard to a testing agency and they said that depending on the circumstances they could probably use such an agency in testing their machinery.

I am not suggesting that this should be a heavy-handed, bureaucratic type of organization which would say no to everything that a modern, innovated company might offer in the way of new ideas for manufacturing farm machinery. I do suggest that if such an agency is established it should be bright, imaginative, innovative and have a modern approach to developing a better farm machinery industry in Canada.

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, let me say by way of introduction how pleased I am to be able to respond to the bright and innovative hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thomson) who has impressed me over the years with his interest in research and development. He has played an active part before the estimates committee on more than one occasion. I can remember some perceptive questioning to the National Research Council and it may have been, as well, to the Science Council of Canada.

I am very much aware of his interest in research and development matters. I am also very much aware of his interest in agricultural matters. It is therefore no great surprise to me that he should couple his interest in research and development with that in agriculture and, in particular, the Barber commission report. I listened very carefully to his statements and references to pages 11 and 12 of the report and to page 147 in respect of development. I share many, if not all, of those sentiments.

In answering the specific question of whether the Minister of State for Science and Technology might recommend to the provincial premiers, either individually or collectively, some form of government assistance to a research or test facility, I have to report to him, as did the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Lessard) on an earlier occasion, that we have not yet received any request from the provincial premiers,