

PRAIRIE GRAIN ADVANCE PAYMENTS ACT

BILL TO AMEND—THIRD READING

Hon. Efstathios William Barootes moved the third reading of Bill C-12, to amend the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act.

Motion agreed to and bill read third time and passed.

CANADA-NEWFOUNDLAND ACCORD IMPLEMENTATION BILL

SECOND READING

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the motion of the Honourable Senator Doody, seconded by the Honourable Senator Muir, for the second reading of the Bill C-6, An Act to implement an agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on offshore petroleum resource management and revenue sharing and to make related and consequential amendments.—(*Honourable Senator MacEachen, P.C.*)

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, last Tuesday we listened to the second reading speech of the Deputy Leader of the Government on Bill C-6. We certainly have no complaint about his forensic style—

Senator Doody: I will look that up.

Senator MacEachen:—but I must say that his speech had a tone of optimism and, possibly, complacency. This, of course, is in marked contrast to the actual evidence that was presented during our committee hearings on the pre-study of the bill. Senator Doody spoke in terms of cooperation, economic activity, benefits, security of supply and self-sufficiency. The committee hearings disclosed a somewhat different reality when it comes to the assessment of the situation, particularly on the east coast.

Before examining the situation as it was revealed in the committee hearings, I should set a bit of atmosphere by asking senators to cast their minds back to February more than two years ago, when the Accord was formally announced in the ballroom of the Hotel Newfoundland. I recall the proud and intemperate boasts that surrounded the announcement of the Atlantic Accord and the proud assertions of those who claimed that prosperity and plenty would come to the province of Newfoundland and that that have-not province would be transformed, almost overnight, into a land of plenty. One of the reporters present, Ms. Diane Francis of the *Toronto Star*, described the atmosphere in the ballroom of the Hotel Newfoundland as one of “near hysteria”. She described the scene as follows: “Yesterday’s news conference on the pact took on the air of an old fashioned religious revival, with the crowd of 500 applauding wildly as five Tory politicians made 90 minutes of speeches.”

● (1510)

I can only say that time has taken its toll, or, to repeat Mr. Diefenbaker’s words, “It’s a long road without ash cans.”

When Tory politicians rise to speak about Newfoundland, particularly in Newfoundland, they no longer speak to hundreds of people applauding wildly. That has all changed. In fact, they are now as likely to criticize their own government for the treatment meted out to that province and the other Atlantic provinces in the field of fisheries and regional development.

It is in that light that the Atlantic Accord must now be examined. In approaching an examination of the bill, and the policy which is behind the bill, I think it is relevant to point out the long delay which the government has allowed in the implementation of this cornerstone of its energy policy. The Atlantic Accord, as I pointed out last Tuesday, which was signed on February 11, 1985, more than two years ago, contained a clause requiring the two governments to introduce enacting legislation within one year. The Government of Canada met that deadline with only three or four days to spare. Bill C-94, as it was then called, was introduced in the House of Commons on February 7, 1986. Of course, given the collapse of oil prices, the timing of the legislation could not have been worse. It took the government almost an additional three months to proceed to second reading of the bill, which took place on May 26, 1986.

In light of the subsequent neglect of this bill by the government, one can hardly but be puzzled by the statement made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on May 26, 1986, when he stated:

It is important that this legislation be passed as expeditiously as possible so these funds can flow to Newfoundland for . . . development projects.

Of course, the Deputy Leader of the Government used almost the same phrase last Tuesday, almost a year following the speech made by the Parliamentary Secretary.

I must say, honourable senators, that the opposition in either house cannot be blamed for any delay in coming to the rescue of the province of Newfoundland. The debate on second reading which took place in the House of Commons began, as I have said, on May 26, 1986, and the bill was referred to a legislative committee on the very same day, with a day or less of debate on that important stage of the bill. The Senate itself embarked on a pre-study of the bill. Neither committee, however, had an opportunity to complete its work and report because Parliament was unexpectedly prorogued by the government on August 28, 1986.

When the new session began on September 30, the opposition in the House of Commons showed its willingness to facilitate government business. On October 3, 1986, unanimous consent was given for Bill C-94 to be deemed to have been introduced, read the first time, read the second time and referred to a legislative committee as Bill C-6. Despite that magnanimity, as I would describe it, by members of the opposition, again there was delay. The committee did not meet