

*Committee Reports*

filibuster to ensure that there is no vote on concurrence in this report. A vote on concurrence will split the Hon. Member's Party because there are Members who support these recommendations and obviously those who do not because the Minister will not implement those recommendations.

The Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster) told us how farmers were having difficulty surviving at this time. I believe people across this country who do not know farmers are making a number of incorrect assumptions. They believe that since a prairie farmer has \$500,000 worth of land he should be prosperous. However, the farmer cannot eat the land and will not be able to produce if he sells it. While farmers in southern Saskatchewan may have had an investment in their land worth \$500,000 at one time, they do not have enough money to feed their families. Other farmers who used to depend on the production of their land in order to survive are suddenly finding themselves in a position where they can no longer make payments on their investment in that farm.

Farmers can no longer live on their equity. While they may be able to borrow on it, conditions such as drought and high input costs will not allow them to survive for very long if they begin to live on that equity. Those farmers who live on their equity soon face bankruptcy.

The committee's recommendations in this unanimous report were ignored. I suggest that it is quite proper, after being ignored for six months, to move concurrence and thereby instruct the Minister of Finance to take action on the two recommendations which he has ignored so far.

● (1520)

**Mr. de Jong:** Mr. Speaker, I was wondering whether the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo) could comment upon another aspect of the matter with which I think we are dealing. It has been a desire of all Hon. Members to see some parliamentary reform. There is a desire that Members of Parliament become more capable of representing their constituents rather than being caught in the straight jacket of being a member of a political Party, of a Government or of an Opposition. Unless we are able, as ordinary Members of Parliament, to get out of these straight jackets, Parliament itself and the parliamentary process become more and more obsolete. We are the representatives of the people, first and more foremost. We deal on a daily basis with the problems of constituents back home. There is the basic belief that the system can only operate if the input from the people's representatives becomes the most important input in the decisions made by Parliament.

We have seen an honest attempt to bring about parliamentary reform. Surely a key element of that is to strengthen the committees, to allow greater independence by committee members and to sit together as Canadian men and women representing their constituents, not as governments Members or opposition Members or as Liberals, New Democrats or Tories. We were elected by our constituents to sit down together to tackle the everyday problems faced by them.

The Finance Committee is doing an important job. It recognizes a tremendous need out there. As my colleague has stated, it has brought together a modest package but an important package or a "first step" type of package. Now we hear the Government saying no to this basic form of parliamentary reform. It is refusing to deal with the recommendations of the committee.

Could my colleague comment upon what he feels this signifies? Does he feel that the whole experiment in reforming Parliament is in essence just a farce and window-dressing and that the Government has no intention of allowing individual Members of Parliament to have greater powers?

**Mr. Hovdebo:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that very philosophical question. He hit on a very important point. We were operating to some extent under the old rules in this case. I am sure there was a certain amount of difficulty on the part of Conservatives when it came to accepting the unanimity of the report, because it was not entirely in line with the basic philosophy of their Party. They looked at it, accepted it and reported to the House with the hope that the Minister would act on it.

I hope that some time in the future—and this follows on the question of the Hon. Member—a committee such as the Finance Committee can report and instruct the Minister, the Government or the Cabinet to take action. To some extent this kind of philosophy would be much more helpful.

The report had the backing of 20 Members who were perhaps not intimately related to agriculture but knew a lot about it because of their positions in the community. They hoped that the report would be acted on. Concurrence in it would have amounted to instructions to the Government to act on it. By not acting on it, the Government is making a farce of its so-called recognition of parliamentary reform.

**Mr. Foster:** Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the comments of the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo) because he is from the Prairies. He realizes the difficult situation faced in the southern parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan with regard to the drought this year. A tremendous opportunity would have been available if the third report of the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs had been adopted. It would have benefited some of those struggling producers. They would have benefited by the 8 per cent money proposed in the agri-bond program, which is an integral part of the third report.

I believe the Hon. Member has correctly assessed the amendment we are debating. In fact it is a deliberate move by the Government to pigeon-hole the report rather than to come before Parliament for it to be voted on. I do not believe many Hon. Members would vote against the report because it recommends an agri-bond program, as was recommended in the Conservative manifesto. The report recommends an agri-bond program on a case by case basis or on a selective basis to assist farmers facing serious financial difficulty. The amendment essentially pigeon holes the whole report and sends it back to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic