

Western Canada Drought

Another interesting point about this most recent issue in terms of the drought in the grain belt in Saskatchewan and Alberta is that this money is now being sent directly to the farmers. Last summer the money for a livestock payment was sent to the Saskatchewan Government. The Government of Saskatchewan did not give credit to the federal Government or the federal Parliament. This time around I see that the federal Government is a little wiser. It does not trust Grant Devine and is making the pay-out directly to the farmers of Saskatchewan.

I would like to make one or two more points before my time runs out. Tomorrow there will be an article in the *Leader Post* written by a journalist named John Miner.

Mr. Della Noce: How do you know that?

Mr. Nystrom: I have very good sources. He is the agricultural reporter for the Regina *Leader Post*, a very, very good reporter. John Miner has tried, through the access to information laws of the country, to get a copy of the report of the Member for Assiniboia. He has tried to get other documents relating to drought relief in Saskatchewan and Alberta. He has been denied a copy of that report under the access to information laws of the country.

Tory times are secretive times, Mr. Speaker. Tory times are tough times. The agricultural reporter for the Regina *Leader Post*, the biggest daily in rural Canada, is being denied access to this report which affects the livelihoods of all kinds of people.

Some 12,000 farmers have appealed that they were not fairly treated by the federal Government with regard to drought assistance. Twelve thousand farmers have said that they were denied coverage because they are not in the drought area and that they did not receive a large enough pay-out for the losses they suffered due to drought. It is almost unheard of for 12,000 farmers to appeal. Yet the Government across the way denies the farmers of Canada the information in the report of the Member for Assiniboia. It denies the farmers of Canada their basic and fundamental democratic right—freedom to information. They have paid for that report. They have spent their hard-earned tax money which the Government took from their pockets, and now the Government is not even letting them see a copy of the report.

To top it off, so far this afternoon Conservative Members have not risen in this House to say why they have denied that right to the farmers of western Canada. Why do they not listen to farmers? Why do they not give the farmers access to their own report? Why do they not in government stand for what they stood for in opposition? We need freedom of information in this House. The public has the right to know. They paid the bill and they have a right to have a copy of that report. This strikes me as being very, very strange. Perhaps there are recommendations in that report which the Prime Minister turned down and now the Government is embarrassed to release it publicly.

There are all kinds of things we could talk about, Mr. Speaker, but the basic principle of the debate today is freedom of information and access to information. The Conservative Party promised this. Walter Baker, Ged Baldwin, and the Member who is now the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) campaigned on this, but the new boys who took over are continuing in the old Liberal tradition of secrecy. Everything is in a tiny, isolated place in the Prime Minister's office and no one else has the right to know. That is not good enough. It is about time that Conservative Members in the House rebelled, followed their convictions, and insisted that this report be made public.

Mr. John Gormley (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak on the motion of the Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria). The Member made some very interesting points in his earlier remarks. The dialogue of the long-time Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) will shed some interesting light on the way in which the people of Saskatchewan view their Government and the way in which the Government views the people of Saskatchewan.

I would like to begin with the intent of this motion. Obviously it is politically motivated in the crassest sense.

Mr. Boudria: There is no room for politics in the Parliament of Canada.

Mr. Gormley: I use the words "politically motivated" because it is really twofold. First, it is inspired by mischief. If this Member really believes that what the Government has done for my home province of Saskatchewan and all of western Canada was insufficient, perhaps he would be brave enough and man enough to stand and say, first, that he believes it is insufficient, and second, with clearly articulated ideas, why he believes it is insufficient. Instead, he tries to summon forth certain papers on a technical motion. Obviously we see this for the crass political mischief it is.

• (1730)

The Hon. Member goes back many years in provincial politics. He is one of those Members who is called Dave Peterson's revenge. He fled the Ontario provincial scene for federal politics just in time. In any event, as a long-time MPP he knows that when a Prime Minister and his Cabinet ask for information and charge a senior Member of Parliament with the responsibility of obtaining that information, he obviously wants to be able to act on the information and get the job done for Saskatchewan farmers, indeed all farmers across Canada. When the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell asks "Did he live up to the report of his task force?" The answer is that obviously he did. The Hon. Member overlooks the political process by saying that this is somehow a secret.

I come from Saskatchewan, as does the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville. However, the person speaking on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers for the Liberals comes from the outskirts of Ottawa. He represents the same Party that during