

the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Ilsley) must recall his fervid eloquence as he told the people of this country of the sad plight in which they were put, because the sugar tax was reduced only from two cents to one cent per pound. There it still remains. Incredible as it may seem, it is the same one cent per pound. Doubtless at an early day, if an election is imminent, the Minister of Finance will reduce or abolish it, just as in 1930 he reduced the sales tax from two per cent to one per cent. I mention these matters because they seem to have a direct bearing upon the observations made in the speech from the throne.

Mr. WARREN: May I ask the right hon. gentleman a question?

Mr. BENNETT: I think it might be desirable for the hon. member to resume his seat.

Mr. SPEAKER: With the consent of the right hon. gentleman the hon. member may ask a question.

Mr. BENNETT: When I have finished the hon. member may ask any questions he wishes.

I have observed, of course, the reference made to the conditions under which we live in western Canada. The prosperity that has been so apparent in some parts of Canada has not been apparent in western Canada, except in the Turner valley. There has been a lack of moisture for which, in days gone by, the members of the present government would have charged the then government with full responsibility. We do not charge that lack of moisture to their account. We do not think, for instance, that a magic wand could be waved by the Minister of Agriculture by which he could reduce the Department of Trade and Commerce to a mere nonentity, will provide moisture for the stricken areas of the west. And we have some doubt as to whether or not a Shaw report would be capable of doing it. I feel quite sure, however, that if we could set up the machinery suggested by that report we might be able to provide, shall we say, some provincial premier with larger powers such as were proposed with respect to a high commissioner.

However, I have only this to say with respect to the administration of the act: It is still a politically administered act. At the proper time and place I should like to bring to this chamber a number of communications, provided the reading of them would not worry the house. But with respect to the relief afforded to those who have been so unfortunate as to live within the areas in question, it is quite clear that this govern-

[Mr. Bennett.]

ment has divorced itself from some of its responsibility, and has left it with the provincial administration.

I shall give an illustration of what I mean, one which may be multiplied many times over. In their wisdom the government may decide that a herd must be reduced; we will say from twenty to ten. The order goes forth, accordingly. The reason is obvious; it lies in the difficulty of providing fodder and feed for the purpose of taking care of twenty head of cattle. The number is reduced to ten, and feed is provided accordingly. But unfortunately—and I say unfortunately, because I am prepared to support my statement with cases, days and dates—when an individual believes that his herd should not be reduced to ten he has recourse to a political effort, and I suppose he cannot be blamed for it. His efforts may induce the authority to say that for the ten may be substituted fifteen. That has been going on constantly. In case after case and community after community men have gone down and said, "It is desirable that John Smith should not be cut down to ten. He is a good fellow; he has great influence; we do not wish to lose his good will. Let us permit him to retain the fifteen he says he must have." It is not altogether unexpected, but our complaint is that these matters should be subject to a purely political administration. The other day in a small community a friend of mine who was a stranger to that community found three inspectors operating. One was in the local area, one was in the combined areas and there was a superintendent—to inspect the inspectors. I assume that is a very difficult task in times like these.

These conditions are inevitable if the conduct of business is left to purely political sources. To quote the language used on many occasions by the first minister, human nature being what it is we are not surprised that this goes on. If any hon. members have any doubt upon it they can verify the facts in a very few minutes.

I repeat that when the money of the taxpayers is being spent in this way it certainly should be done by some independent commission, so as to prevent not only the opportunity but the temptation for political administration. However, I am not so young that I do not realize how difficult it is for governments to withstand the pressure brought to bear, as in this instance, when herds are being cut down, when fodder is to be provided and representations are made as to the desirability of making exceptions in the cases of Smith, Jones or some others. When we multiply that procedure the effect