

Mr. Foster: I asked the Minister yesterday whether there was going to be an exemption for farmers and he said there is no exemption for farmers. The Tories were very proud last fall to announce a reduction in excise tax for farmers, but they did not say anything about the 9 cents a gallon tax they were imposing in September. I asked the Minister if the additional 4 cents or 5 cents a gallon tax announced today was going to be imposed on farmers and he as much as said yes. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources made a speech at Inuvik about two months ago saying that she was going to put in place a new petroleum incentive program. The discussion in her department is that another 2 cents a litre tax is going to be imposed on Canadians some time next fall or winter.

I wanted to comment on the speech by the Hon. Member because he certainly touched on those points where the Tories are really putting pressure on Canadian agriculture.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the comments of my hon. colleague. The amendment proposed by the Minister resembles an economic forecast. It could be interpreted about 45 different ways and there does not seem to be a consensus even on what it means. He issued a press release to explain what he means, but reading the press release and then reading the amendment is like reading two different things. That has a number of people worried.

The tax increase on gasoline for farmers, the harvest tax if you like, perpetrated by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and put up with by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise), undoubtedly with a lot of reluctance, is shameful indeed. The Conservative Party pledged so much to the farmers last summer. I have a list of Tory promises, 20 of them specifically for the farming sector.

Mr. Wise: Sixteen.

Mr. Boudria: Well, there are 20 here. That is the problem with the Tories; they promise things and then they forget, or they try to forget. But we are here to remind them. None of the promises which I have here say, "Vote for us and we will tax you more". If this is such a great idea, why did they not advocate it last summer when they were seeking the votes of farmers across the country? The reason is obvious, Mr. Speaker. They did not talk about it because there were no votes in it. That is the trouble with that Party. It has made too many promises to too many people and cannot live up to the commitments it made. That is called breaking promises or breaking sacred trusts.

● (1950)

Mr. Caldwell: You are breaking my heart.

Mr. Boudria: I don't know if I am breaking the Member's heart, and I don't really care. I care about the farmers of this country and that is what is important. Maybe the Member across will stand and speak on behalf of the farmers of his riding. That is what he should do. He should stand up to the

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Minister of Finance and tell him that he cannot tax the farmers out of business, as the Government is trying to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria) on a speech that was right to the point, and ask him to comment on one aspect of this Bill which has raised major concerns across the country, not only among provincial representatives but also among many groups of producers. It was said, more specifically, that once a province had signed an agreement, it would no longer have the right to plead variations in production costs that would necessarily occur, and they will necessarily occur across the country. We cannot expect costs to be the same for a farmer in Western Canada, a farmer in Ontario, a farmer in Quebec and a farmer in the Maritimes.

According to the parties who appeared before the committee, some way must be found to enable a province, once it has signed the agreement, to raise the issue of costs specific to a certain region and make it possible to negotiate the kind of system that will be required to make the tripartite system suggested by the Conservative Government function satisfactorily across the country. To resolve this problem, yesterday the Hon. Member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) presented an amendment that would allow for cost variations and would make the legislation a little fairer and a little more equitable. I would like to know what the Hon. Member thinks of the Government Members' incredible refusal, especially those Members from Eastern Canada, an area where costs vary considerably. Why did Conservative Members from Eastern Canada not support this amendment?

Mr. Boudria: As you would know, Mr. Speaker, I made a speech in support of the amendment described by my colleague the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet). Frankly I too was very surprised to see that the Conservative Members did not at least express an opinion in favour of this amendment, as they should have done if they really represented their ridings.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is happening is that not only do costs differ in certain provinces, as my colleague the Hon. Member for Papineau so aptly described it, but they sometimes differ within the same province. For instance, production costs in a given region of the Gaspé area might differ from those in the Eastern Townships, and the same thing goes for Eastern Ontario which I represent, costs are not the same as those in the southwest. It is obvious that an amendment such as the one proposed by the Hon. Member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) should have been unanimously endorsed by all Members of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart).