

*The Address—Mr. Mazankowski*

in the Speech from the Throne. I am concerned about the fact that today the native people find themselves more frustrated than at any other point in time because of the expectations brought about by this government, prompted largely by the fact that they were asked to participate in the discussion with regard to policy. They were given reasonable assurance that the government would listen to their representations. Are we to assume that matters affecting the native population will not be dealt with this session? I believe this urgent matter must be considered. I want to go on record as stating that this is a glaring omission. The government should seriously consider introducing acceptable policies for our native people, taking into consideration their submissions.

There has been a detailed investigation into the prices of farm machinery. The Barber Commission investigated the prices of farm machinery. I believe the cost of that Commission was in the neighbourhood of \$1½ million. This Commission, which was launched in 1966, issued a very strong indictment against the major multi-national corporations which engaged in the practice of price fixing at the expense of the farmers. The Commission stated this has resulted in discriminately high prices. If this is true, some action should have been taken by this time. It is imperative that this charge be disposed of immediately. This matter should be brought before the Standing Committee on Agriculture. I believe that the machinery companies should be asked to appear before the committee to answer the charges made by the report.

• (8:10 p.m.)

Furthermore, in light of the task force report on agriculture which asks farmers to become more efficient and competitive, I suggest that the time to act is now. The whole tone of the task force report is efficiency. I do not believe there is a producer in the country who would argue that he must be an efficient producer, that he must be competitive, in order to capitalize on the potential of our export markets. This is a time when he sees his input costs increasing yearly without any measureable control. I submit that every possible step must be taken to effect some control. Certainly, this is an area, in light of the Barber report, in which some improvements can be made.

The spread between farm production income and input has been further widened this past year by the unpegging of the dollar, bringing about further reductions in the price of farm products destined for export. As a matter of fact, immediately after the unpegging of the dollar we saw a decline in the price of wheat of something of the order of 6 per cent. The price of livestock earmarked for export decreased proportionately. This reduction was necessary in order to maintain our competitive position within those markets. Consequently, one can only assume that the input costs—and I refer specifically to those inputs that are a major factor in the cost of production, namely farm machinery and farm machinery parts—would have been reduced accordingly had there been a premium on the Canadian dollar. However, to this date no such decrease has been apparent.

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

As matter of fact, we are told now that farm machinery prices are going up. The prices of farm machinery parts have increased throughout the year, and many of the farm machinery companies are asking for orders in various parts of the country because there is a price increase in store within the next year. This is all very strange to me because I can recall quite clearly in 1962, when the dollar was devalued, that almost immediately a surcharge was imposed of some 7 or 7½ per cent on all items imported into this country—by items, I mean machinery, and machinery parts in particular—to offset the discrepancy created by the pegging of the dollar. Now that the situation has been reversed, no countervailing action has resulted, and probably never will unless some pressure is brought to bear.

When I questioned the minister in this House this afternoon, he suggested that this matter is under review by the Barber Commission. We can all see for ourselves just what effect the Barber Commission has had to date. It has been conducting a study since 1966 and many recommendations have been made, yet none of these recommendations has been translated into legislative action.

I submit that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) or the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford), should look into this matter and look into it immediately. If to compete in international markets we must lower our export prices as a result of the increased value of the dollar, then I think a corresponding premium should be added to the value of our dollar when we import items which are necessary to produce farm commodities.

The Throne Speech also makes reference to the improved export position of grains, and I am certainly glad it specifies grains rather than wheat. I say this because in many press circles this question of increased grain exports has been interpreted as an increase in our exports of wheat. But this is not the case.

The speech also praises the government for the success of the Lift program. Let me make it very clear that I think the success of the Lift program has been due largely to the weatherman more than anything else. We are all awaiting the program that is going to be instituted next year, especially since, as the House knows, there is plenty of summerfallow in western Canada this year. Under the Lift program and the wheat reduction acreage program, this year the farmers were asked to restrain from increasing their acreage of feed grain, particularly barley and oil seeds. However, we are now told that demand for barley is excellent. As a matter of fact, our sales figures indicate that exports of barley have been very good.

There has been some suggestion that we may not be able to fill all available orders for barley, and there was evidence of this as early as last spring when prospects for barley looked promising. However, this information was not transmitted to the producers; as a result many were not able to capitalize on the buoyant demand for barley.