

the conversion process as soon as possible which is as necessary to Canada as to the other countries.

[English]

AGRICULTURE

TABLING OF SPECIAL REPORT ON PRICES OF TRACTORS AND COMBINES

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table copies in each of the official languages of a "Special Report on Prices of Tractors and Combines in Canada and Other Countries." This is a report of the Royal Commission on Farm Machinery. The importance and thoroughness of this report and its implications for Canadian farmers are recognized by the government, and it is the intention of the government to consider the report and its recommendations most carefully.

Since the report covers matters that are the concern of or fall within the jurisdiction of several departments, an interdepartmental working group has been formed, the function of which will be to make recommendations to the government. Already this group has initiated discussions with officials in the United States and Britain. It should be noted that this special report covers only one phase of the commission's investigations and that the final report will be available in late summer.

In the meantime the government would welcome the views of organizations, firms or individuals in respect of this important matter.

Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent-Essex): Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with the statement made by the Minister of Agriculture to the House this morning because I think it reveals to the House and to the country as a whole the actual capability of the government in dealing with this major problem.

Some years ago it became apparent to those in the agricultural industry as a whole that they were in difficulty in trying to make an economic living, and since the government was little disposed to increase the prices that farmers could receive for their produce the emphasis of farm groups was placed on input costs, the major proportion of which, other than that of land, lay in the realm of farm machinery.

• (11:30 a.m.)

As long as four years ago the agricultural industry in Canada found there was a great deal of difference between what Canadian farmers had to pay for their equipment com-

Tabling of Report

pared with what farmers in other nations had to pay. As a matter of fact, farm groups in this country took the initiative and found that it was possible to procure farm machinery in Great Britain at a much lower cost than in Canada. As a result, representations were made to this government to such a degree that the government appointed a commission to study the cost of farm machinery in other countries.

This morning the minister has tabled a special report, and he indicates it should be noted that it only covers one phase of the commission's investigation. Without having seen the report, Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared to believe that it is perhaps an edited or elaborated version of what was presented to the agricultural congress almost 12 months ago. Now we have it presented to Parliament.

It is an interim report, Mr. Speaker, and the government says it is going to take it under consideration. But before it does so it is going to set up another committee to study the report's ramifications in respect of various departments and this committee is to make a report to the government. This is just further procrastination and it shows, to my mind, that the government has no initiative, no aggressiveness and very little appreciation of the problem facing the agricultural industry today.

The real attitude of the government was amply portrayed by the minister in his statement. This commission was set up on the basis of representations made to the government by the agricultural industry of Canada, but his last words were that "in the meantime the government would welcome the views of organizations, firms or individuals in respect of this important matter." Mr. Speaker, in four years all this government has done is go round in a full circle.

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, while we were supplied with a copy of the minister's statement, for which we thank him, we would have also appreciated a copy of the press summary supplied to the news media.

It has been so long since the Barber Commission held its first hearings that farmers were beginning to wonder whether a report would ever be filed. Since farm machinery capital and repair costs represent such a proportionally large percentage of total farm expenses, great interest will be aroused by the filing of this report. Farmers have long felt that Canadian farm machinery prices

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