

Senator Stewart: It would be helpful to have the amounts, dates, and so on.

Now I should like to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate if the government has borrowed money for either 1988-89 or 1989-90 on the basis of any authority other than the Borrowing Authority Act, 1987-88 and the Borrowing Authority Act, 1988-89? If so, what authority or authorities were used, and in each case what was the amount borrowed and the dates of the borrowing? I do not expect the Leader of the Government to have the information right now.

Senator Murray: As the honourable senator is aware, those are normally questions that would be put on the order paper, but I shall take them as notice and provide a reply shortly.

ABORTION

RIGHTS OF UNBORN—LACK OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

Hon. Stanley Haidasz: Honourable senators, I think it was appalling and indeed intolerable that there was nothing in yesterday's Throne Speech pertaining to definite government legislation in this session of Parliament dealing with the tragedy of crimes against the foetus, and that on the subject of abortion legislation this government's only announcement in the Throne Speech was more stalling, after a year and three months of indecision.

Senator Perrault: Shame!

Senator Haidasz: I should like to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate: When is this government going to show moral courage and decisive leadership by announcing a definite date for the introduction of legislation to protect the right to life of the unborn and to stop this killing of 200 innocent human lives every day in this country?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, the government made an earnest effort in the course of the last Parliament—

Senator Perrault: Earnest effort!

Senator Murray: —to obtain the necessary consensus of Parliament that would enable us to proceed with legislation. Absent that consensus, I cannot see how legislation could have proceeded. As the Throne Speech indicated yesterday, we are now considering the situation in the light of the latest jurisprudence on the subject from the Supreme Court of Canada.

● (1450)

Senator Haidasz: Can the government leader tell us how long the government is going to consider and weigh this vital issue?

Senator Murray: As long as it takes.

Senator Haidasz: Honourable senators, that is an intolerable answer.

Senator Perrault: What kind of answer is that?

Senator Haidasz: I do not see how the Leader of the Government can make such a reply in this house. It is shameful. It is really a terrible disregard of innocent lives.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, on this issue my friend placed a private member's bill on the order paper last session. If he wishes to bring another bill forward this session, he is free to do so. Meanwhile, the government will study the situation in the light of the Supreme Court decision and will decide what response to make after it has considered the matter fully.

Senator Haidasz: Has the government not received any advice or information from the Department of Justice or from other federal departments in this regard? Is it the government's incompetence, or perhaps lack of moral courage to take action, that has resulted in this delay?

Senator Frith: There is no reason why it couldn't be both!

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, in respect of any initiative brought forward, the government would want to be certain of a consensus in Parliament in favour of such an initiative. Absent such a consensus, there can and will be no legislation.

Senator Haidasz: Shame!

AGRICULTURE

WESTERN CANADA—DROUGHT RELIEF PROGRAM— AVAILABILITY OF PAYMENTS

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate with regard to drought assistance for farmers in western Canada. As my honourable friend is aware, farmers are getting ready now for planting and are experiencing a serious cash shortage, particularly in those areas that have suffered from the drought. In addition, due to the increase in interest rates over the past period farmers are finding themselves doubly squeezed, so there is real urgency in getting these payments out to them. Could the government leader inform us when the farmers can expect those payments to be made?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, I am aware that the date of mailing of interim cheques has been put back and I will try to obtain more precise information on when those cheques can be expected. Meanwhile, I have to say that this is one of the most involved programs ever undertaken by the Department of Agriculture. I am informed that the impact of the drought varied greatly from location to location. The government is attempting to make payments that are crop specific and location specific.

I am also informed that producer review committees will be established in the near future to provide the government with direction on drought zones and to mediate producer disputes. Having said that, I will try to obtain more detailed information from my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, and I will advise honourable senators accordingly.