

that will be tabled on Friday contains a provision for an interim payment right now?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I believe the difference between that Party, as it was led and as it is presently led, and this Party, is that we can deal with several priorities, not only with one. We believe that western grain farmers are one priority. There are other priorities in the country. The ability of a Government is shown in its ability to deal with several priorities, not only with one at a time.

Mr. Gustafson: How about the CPR?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has clearly indicated that the concerns and bankruptcies of Canadian western farmers are a priority way down his list. It is not way down the list of this Party or of this Parliament, and it should not be way down on his.

REQUEST THAT LEGISLATION BE PASSED BY MAY 18

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister now has a chance to prove that he cares about western Canada, that he cares about the region he once told me somebody else would have to worry about. He has a chance to prove that now, and he could do it by bringing in that legislation for debate and completion next week. Will he do it? Will he do that for the West?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the House will remember that we have taken four days, lost four days, on the Crown Corporations Bill, which is also one of the priorities of the Government.

Some Hon. Members: Lost!

Mr. Trudeau: The House will know that in Parliaments where they have more civilized Oppositions, they deal with Bills at second reading in one day, and they do not just try to talk those Bills out. That permits Governments in such Parliaments to deal with several priorities at a time.

The Right Hon. Member for Yellowhead seems to think that because we want to deal with other Bills we are downgrading western farmers. That is an example of politics which, in the long run, did not even benefit the Hon. Member. Otherwise he would not be sitting in that seat, he would be sitting in that one.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe.

Mr. McDermid: You have got to get in the cheap shots.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: It is better than sitting in that art deco house in Montreal.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe has the floor.

Oral Questions

NATIONAL REVENUE

PROVISION OF SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBERS TO CREDIT BUREAUX

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. Could he confirm that, contrary to Section 241 of the Income Tax Act, his Department has been giving taxpayers' social insurance numbers to private credit bureaux. If so, how extensive has this practice been?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members often ask questions and we often enquire about the use of social insurance numbers on some Departmental documents.

I must admit that I was not aware that taxpayers' social insurance numbers were being passed on to private credit bureaux. I will gladly find out and advise the Hon. Member accordingly.

● (1440)

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT'S DEALINGS WITH CREDIT BUREAUX

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister not recall the letter that he signed on April 30, 1984, addressed to my colleague from Calgary West, in which he said:

Further to an investigation into this matter by my officials, it has been determined that, on occasion, officials of my Department have used the services of the credit bureaux in identifying taxpayers by making reference to the social insurance number.

If the Minister does not remember that, will he refresh his memory? Second, will he tell the House how extensive is the giving of confidential information contrary, as he points out, to Section 241 of the Income Tax Act, and precisely what use is being made by his Department of private credit bureaux?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): As I said, Mr. Speaker, there are times when we have to quote social insurance numbers in our communications with private agencies to ensure that bookkeeping data are correctly recorded in our computer system or that debits or credits in the account of a taxpayer are accurately posted. That is why we are using social insurance numbers in our dealings which is not contrary to the specific provisions of the Income Tax Act prohibiting the release of confidential information.

As far as this particular case is concerned, however, or how extensive has the practice been, again I will be glad to find out and to report to the Hon. Member.