

*Adjournment Debate*

genuine economic activity on the other. We will not automatically create a regeneration of economic activity by forgiving taxes. The Hon. Member has used that argument but I must differ with him on that point.

The role of farmers, across Canada, is of course very important. I visited his riding and had an opportunity to listen to some very concerned and sympathetic people who discussed with me the difficulties they were having raising beef. It seemed to me, as I listened to them, that their problems were not with taxation but, rather, with high interest rates and low consumer prices. I asked whether relief from taxes would give them the relief they needed to survive, and their answer was no. They needed higher prices and some shelter from the economic storms that were hitting everyone.

If we were to follow the line of thought the Hon. Member has just given, we would have to start distinguishing between the activities of Canadians. We would have to say that farmers are a deserving group and should, therefore, be forgiven taxes. However, what about medical doctors? Are they not a useful, important group in our society? They must drive cars. Are they to be forgiven the fuel taxes on their vehicles if they drive to see a sick patient or to a hospital? Many people obviously do these important jobs. What is much more important here is to zero in on the economic problems from which the people are suffering and to try to solve those problems.

Let me point out to the Hon. Member to some of the activities of the Government. The \$400 million extra injection into the Farm Credit Corporation is one good example of how we have attacked a basic problem by trying to shelter people from high interest rates, giving them relief under that Corporation. That, it seems to me, is a much better cure than a hodge podge on the tax system which discriminates in favour of one Canadian and against another, or chooses to artificially set taxes for one activity with none for another.

I thank the Hon. Member for reminding me of the importance of the farm community, but I must tell him that the cure he has proposed is not to be a genuine cure for the problems of the farmers.

REQUEST FOR FREE VOTE ON ISSUE OF CRUISE MISSILE TESTING. (B) REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT ALLOCATE DAY FOR DEBATE

**Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam):** Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday last the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), in response to a question of mine in the House of Commons, said he would welcome a debate on the Cruise missile test plans, yet he refused to allocate a Government day for that debate. He suggested that the New Democratic Party might use an opposition day for such a debate. I think he knew we had no opposition days left before the end of the year. The urgency of the debate is such that I do not believe we can wait until some time in the new year whenever that might be, and whenever the Conservatives might agree that we have such a debate on an opposition day.

• (2220)

The Government has been assuring us, through the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne), and the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen), that the new weapons agreement being drawn up in secret with the Pentagon is about to be signed—the framework agreement—and that the Cruise missile testing within that agreement has been agreed upon in principle, and the details will be worked out. This is imminent. In fact the Minister of National Defence said a couple of months ago in a letter to me that it would be within a few weeks. It could very well take place, therefore, during the Christmas adjournment. It was for this reason that I urged the Prime Minister to set aside a Government daysince we, as I say, do not have the NDP opposition day left before the end of the year. We have already used an opposition day on the Minority Report on Security and Disarmament. That debate did not deal with Cruise missile testing. The Prime Minister on that occasion said, as indeed he says will be true on every opposition day, that he will treat it as a vote of confidence and, therefore, will not allow a free vote.

The purpose of having a Government day with a resolution presented by the Government to the House delineating the framework agreement and the cruise missile testing agreement under it, is that the Government would not have to regard a vote on that as a vote of want of confidence. This would accomplish what the Prime Minister says he wants to accomplish, namely a debate, although I must say I have my doubts. He says he views the Cruise missile testing matter as extremely serious. This would give us the opportunity to have a debate.

I reminded the Prime Minister that the last time such a measure of magnitude in the field of defence was being undertaken, and agreement sought with the United States, was the NORAD agreement in 1958. This weapons testing agreement, nuclear weapons testing in particular, is the most significant matter, in my view and I think the view of all Members of the House, to come before us involving Canadian-American relations in matters of defence. At that time the Government of the day, under Mr. Diefenbaker, first of all said no to the Liberal opposition request for a Government resolution to bring the matter before the House. On May 19, 1958, Mr. Pearson, then the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition said:

Is it the intention of the government in respect of this very important intergovernmental agreement to follow the normal procedure of giving the house an opportunity, by the submission of a resolution, to express its views?

The then Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Smith) in answer to that question replied:

—I would say no.

The next day, however, May 20, 1958, the Prime Minister of the day, Mr. Diefenbaker, did agree that on a matter of this importance there should be a Government resolution, that the matter should be debated and should come to a vote. That indeed, is what happened. That is the precedent I asked the Prime Minister to follow, and he has refused.