

Non-smokers' Health Act

Let us move on with the passage of this Bill. I will have more comments to make in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think you will find that if you were to ask for consent, there is the consent of the House that we take this Bill to Committee of the Whole rather than to a legislative committee so that we could complete all stages of the Bill this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it so agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Agreed and so ordered.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, though I am given only a few minutes to speak on this Bill, I do wish to bring up a point of view that is expressed by those in my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk. My riding contains one of the largest numbers of tobacco growers in the country. It is a tobacco growing region where farmers have most felt the impact of Government policies in this area.

I rise knowing that all three Parties have indicated their support for this Bill and that numerous cancer associations and anti-smoking groups have also supported the Bill. However, I do want to bring up the point that issues affecting the farmers of Haldimand—Norfolk have not been addressed in this debate. The tobacco companies about which everyone seems to be talking with Mr. Neville speaking on their behalf do not speak for the tobacco farmers, so I want to say a few words in this regard.

When we talk about this issue, it seems that we sometimes forget about the rights of the rural tobacco farmers to sustain themselves and to create livelihoods for themselves and their families. I am not placing the economic well-being of some Canadians ahead of the health of other Canadians, but I do want to point out the shortcomings of the Government's policies with regard to tobacco farmers. These policies were greatly discussed when this Bill went through committee the last time. The committee recommended that something had to be done for the tobacco farmers to help them get out of the industry and get into alternative crops.

I feel that the Government's programs relating to alternative crops should be condemned by the House. The committee reviewed the situation of tobacco farmers and indicated that tobacco farmers should be compensated adequately. However, the recent Budget shows that money going toward the orderly rationalization and diversification of the tobacco producing industry was cut.

The tobacco farmers realize the situation they are in. They have worked for many years to develop the industry but they realize that there will be a need for them to move to other areas. However, they expect that a Government with programs which directly affect them should help them to grow alternative crops.

In the Budget there was a decrease of some \$6 million, from \$10 million down to \$4 million in funds to help tobacco farmers grow alternative crops. I condemn that outright. I think—

Mr. Crosbie: So vote against the Bill.

Mr. Speller: I will, thank you. I feel that the Government made a commitment. In fact, during the election the Deputy Prime Minister, the part-time Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Mazankowski), came into my riding and to a number of surrounding ridings, including the ridings of Elgin and Oxford whose Members are not present for this debate, and said that he would support tobacco farmers and would help them get into other areas of production. We see that this is not the case.

I want to read into the record a little note I received, and I know the Hon. Member across the aisle will want to listen to it. It is a note from a tobacco farmer, a lady who lost her husband. She is indicating the situation she is in. Granted, this is a letter from just one family, but I can show Hon. Members the numerous letters I have received which essentially discuss the same thing.

Mr. Crosbie: Quit beating around the bush, just tell us where you stand.

Mr. Speller: I am not beating around the bush and the Hon. Member knows that. Someone has to stand up for the tobacco farmers of Canada. The Government does not seem to be doing so.

Mr. Crosbie: You stand up for them.