

*Adjournment Debate*

Therefore I am not expressing an opinion in my name or in the name of the Secretary of State since it is a legal matter. The CBC inquired from its legal advisers what right it had, on the basis of the recommendations by the Public Accounts Committee, to claim this money from its employees, and the legal advice was the following:

If the corporation should lodge such claims against its employees before a Canadian court, it would probably have no chance of succeeding.

As parliamentary secretary to the spokesman for the CBC in this House, I wish to assure the hon. member that the Secretary of State had lengthy discussions about this problem with CBC officials. Following the oral question directed January last by the hon. member to the Secretary of State, the president of the corporation wrote to the hon. member to assure him of his full co-operation towards a solution. The Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts, which I personally attended, reviewed the question before approving the corporation's budget. The president of the corporation then answered the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee, before which he had not appeared since the previous administration. He replied quite clearly, basing himself on documents in support of the legal aspect of his position. I therefore wish to assure the hon. member, and all other hon. members, of the interest taken in this matter by the CBC, the Secretary of State and myself, as a parliamentary secretary.

One thing, however, is certain: the Secretary of State cannot be asked to exceed his jurisdiction, but we will try to take action within our powers, and to find a solution if there is one.

[*English*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair recognizes the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Hales) for the purpose only of providing the date for the speech he made previously.

**Mr. Hales:** June 27, 1972, Mr. Speaker.

AGRICULTURE—FARM MACHINERY—IMPLEMENTATION  
OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF BARBER COMMISSION—  
ACTION TO INCREASE IMPORTS

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville):** Mr. Speaker, on February 5 I asked the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) a question regarding the Barber commission which studied the cost of farm machinery. I asked him what recommendations of that commission he was planning to implement, in view of increasing farm machinery costs. His answer was, "None at the present time." Because of that inadequate answer I want to pursue the question for a few minutes this evening. I also asked about a commitment made by his predecessor regarding imports of farm machinery into Canada. Again his answer was very vague; he said that he had met two ambassadors. As a result, I want to pursue that question also this evening.

The three prairie ministers of agriculture said, after a meeting last week, that one of the issues they are really concerned about is the increase in the cost of farm machinery, farm machinery parts, and repairs. These costs have been going up very rapidly in the past year. As a

matter of fact, when I go around my constituency, as all of us from the rural areas do, one of the biggest complaints I receive is about the rapid increase in the price of farm machinery and of parts and repairs. These prices have been increasing much too rapidly in the last few years and this must stop.

● (2210)

In this House we hear a lot about the problem of increasing food prices. If production costs could be brought down, this would affect the price of food or would at least slow down the increase. If the input of the farmer could be controlled as to price, in the production of a bushel of wheat or a hog or beef it would be reflected at the retail level. The same thing is true, of course, of the input of such things as fertilizers, gas and oil that a farmer uses.

As we all know, the farmer is being squeezed off the land. This is mainly due to the drop in farm income. In my province, between 1968 and 1970 farm income was cut in half, but in the last few years it has gone up. The rural areas are being depopulated and one of the reasons is the increase in production costs to the farmer. The government will have take action in this area very quickly if it is to help the small and marginal farmers in this country.

Sad to say, the government has the solution at its fingertips in the Barber commission report, but that has been put away and is gathering dust. This report should be brought forward and its recommendations put into effect along with the recommendations of the governments of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta. The report says that farmers are the victims of the farm machinery companies, that they are paying too much for machinery and repairs. I suggest that the government should act on the recommendations listed in the report.

Apart from implementing this report, the government should establish a prices review board for all products. Then it could investigate the increase in the price of farm machinery and the cost of parts and repairs. If these increases were not justified, the government would have the statutory power to control or roll back prices. I think the government will have to take this step to ensure that the price of farm machinery is maintained at a level which will enable the farmer to survive.

There should also be more standardization of farm machinery parts. Perhaps machinery could be imported from countries such as Roumania at more favourable prices. There should also be more public involvement in public-private enterprise to produce more machinery, and perhaps aid and assistance could be given to the co-operative implements' plants in this country. These are some of the suggestions contained in the Barber commission report or advanced by the provincial governments.

I take this opportunity tonight to urge the government to act on the report as it refers to farm machinery and parts. If world depopulation continues, rural communities will be eroded and before long most of the people will live in a few large metropolitan areas that are unplanned, polluted and depersonalized. The only institution that can prevent this is the federal government. It has the power and the jurisdiction, and it is about time it shifted gears, got into action and implemented some of the recommendations of the Barber commission report.