

Oral Questions

have complied, as well as we could, to the representations Mr. Bulloch made to us prior to the budget.

Over all, the budget flows considerable benefits into the small business community and, if the hon. member wants me to take the time later I will be happy to go into great detail to demonstrate to the small business men of this country that the budget is a very positive help to them in the current circumstances. Indeed, if I may say so, budget policies have already had the impact of reducing the bank rate substantially.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacEachen: That in itself will have a beneficial effect on small business.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jelinek: Madam Speaker, anyone who believes that small business has not been hurt by this minister's budget is either a fool or a Liberal.

An hon. Member: Both.

Mr. Jelinek: It was not just John Bulloch who came out with these statistics. Dunwoody, Clarkson Gordon and most other chartered accounting firms in this country know that the minister's policies are hurting the small business sector.

REQUEST FOR INTRODUCTION OF MINI BUDGET

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton): Madam Speaker, now that the minister has admitted two mistakes in the last two days which, to his credit, he has corrected, will he now assure this House that he will either introduce a mini-budget in the very near future or make a new economic statement in order to rectify the inequities which have resulted from last Thursday's budget which are damaging the small business sector and hurting low and middle-income Canadians? Will he do that, and will he give that assurance to this House today?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): No, Madam Speaker, but what I will do at the first opportunity is discuss in detail with hon. members in the House of Commons the impact of the budget which, in the main, is to establish within the tax system more justice, and to ensure that those in lower-income brackets and middle-income brackets are not carrying a disproportionate share of the tax burden in this country, and that those workers who depend entirely on employment income and who must pay fully on their employment income through the tax system are not, when compared with other taxpayers, put into a situation of inequity. That is the broad thrust of the budget, and that is the budget I will defend. If hon. members can make proposals to me in Committee of the Whole which would improve the operation of any of these measures, obviously I will consider them.

With respect to certain corporate organizations I issued yesterday transitional rules or grandfather clauses which are often the result of tax changes, and I will continue to make

such adjustments as required. But I assure the hon. member that I will not withdraw from the basic thrust of this budget, which is to establish a long needed reform in the direction of social justice in the tax system.

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AGRICULTURE

REQUEST FOR PROGRESS REPORT ON INTRODUCTION OF BEEF STABILIZATION PROGRAM

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture. Last Monday I was prepared to welcome the minister home from Rome and the FAO meetings, but today I think it is much more important to welcome him home to the extremely serious and critical situation in Canada's total beef cattle industry. That situation is so critical that I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that today our cattle situation is more serious than it was 40 years ago when we had ten years of depression, drought and despair, throughout the thirties. I say that very sincerely because today—

Madam Speaker: Order. I can see that the hon. member has a few pages to read. I ask him, please, to put his question now.

Mr. Hargrave: Madam Speaker, is the minister now prepared to indicate what progress he is making to establish a national harmonized beef stabilization program for the total year of 1981—when it is concluded, of course—which would involve the governments of the cattle provinces, the cattle producers themselves, the federal department and the minister's staff, and has he arranged to meet with the cattle producers to plan this stabilization program?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. member is aware that I recently mailed letters to all the beef producers in Canada. I believe there was a total of 140,000 letters. Included with them were questionnaires asking producers their personal opinions on what they think I should do. I believe there were five questions asking what I should do about the condition the red meat industry is in at present.

I agree to some extent with what the hon. member said about the economic condition of the industry, but many of the leaders in that industry have said that we should follow the system of marketing which has existed for years, and that we should not change it in any fashion or form. As far as I am concerned, producers have not been led down a golden path; it has been a bad economic path. We are trying to come up with some kind of plan which will make their economic return what it should be. I know that is what the hon. member wants. I want that and, for the good of the whole nation, we all want it.

Mr. Hargrave: Madam Speaker, those same leaders of the cattle industry will be very disappointed today that the minister did not respond to my question about a specific date for a meeting with the cattle producers.