

*Western Canada Drought*

do not even know whether the report contains one sheet of paper or 45 volumes like the Nielsen Task Force report. We do not know what it looks like. All farmers in western Canada, particularly those in Assiniboia, want to know whether the Hon. Member did his job.

**Some Hon. Members:** They know he did.

**Mr. Gormley:** What a joke! How many Grits are there in Assiniboia?

**Mr. Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative surfer on this side is asking how many Grits there are in Assiniboia.

**Mr. Gormley:** You don't even know where Assiniboia is.

**Mr. Boudria:** What the Hon. Member is telling us is that a Member of the House has no right to ask questions of the Government. The Tory attitude is that members of the Opposition do not have the right to question the Government. It is typical Tory attitude once again displayed before you, Mr. Speaker. I am sure you are insulted by that kind of nonsense. Mr. Speaker, I am sure you hope, as I do, that he will apologize to the House later for being so partisan. I was only asking for a very distinguished Hon. Member of the House to table his report so that we can all view it. Is that abnormal?

**Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure that if the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria), a self-proclaimed drought expert from the edge of Ottawa, really wants to find out, he will sit down and give the Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister (Mr. Gustafson) a chance to tell his story.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr. Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, obviously that is not a point of order. It is another abuse of time by a Conservative Member.

It is our duty as opposition Members to ask questions on behalf of Canadians. I do not apologize for representing a riding which has a little more rain than some of the ridings in western Canada. I am very proud of the riding which I represent in the Parliament of our country.

I should also like to refer to an article which appeared in the August 16, 1985 edition of the *Star-Phoenix* entitled "Tory Drought Aid a Sleazy Operation".

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Boudria:** Those are not my words. In case anyone here thinks I may be partisan, if there is such a person, let me read something far more objective by a very distinguished reporter. It indicated that the Saskatchewan Government announced a drought assistance plan on August 9, promising livestock producers in severe drought areas \$60 per head for beef, dairy cattle and horses, and \$12 for sheep and goats. It also indicated that in moderate areas the payments would be \$30 and \$6. As the press release indicated, the Saskatchewan Government

committed \$60 per head. Further on the article indicated that the Hon. Member for Assiniboia was appointed by the Prime Minister to head the drought task force with a mandate to determine how best to assist farmers. That is why we are here today; we are here to determine how those farmers should have been assisted or what is the best way of assisting them today.

**Mr. McDermid:** We did.

**Mr. Boudria:** I hear a Conservative Member across the way from the agricultural riding of Brampton saying: "We did".

**Mr. McDermid:** Brampton—Georgetown has some of the most productive farms in Canada.

**Mr. Boudria:** How do we know that they did? We want to find out what was in the report. We want to determine whether in fact the Hon. Member for Assiniboia provided a report which fulfilled the needs of the farmers of his community. Deep down inside we think he did just that, and the Prime Minister did not listen to him. That is what I contend. If it is otherwise, let us see the report.

I thank the House for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important issue.

**Mr. Len Gustafson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, indeed it is a pleasure to be given an opportunity to speak and give an account of the actions of the Government with regard to the drought of the past summer. At the outset I want to say that it became evident that for the third year in some areas a drought was inevitable. Immediately upon learning that, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) asked the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) if he would go to western Canada and look at the situation. The Hon. Minister of Agriculture visited different parts of the serious drought areas both in Saskatchewan and in Manitoba. He observed the dilemma of the drought. He proceeded to take some action. He asked if I would chair the task force on drought, and from that task force we made recommendations to the Government.

● (1710)

I want to say at the offset that no Government and no Prime Minister in the history of the country since the days of John Diefenbaker have taken more interest in agriculture and in the problems farmers face, particularly when it comes to drought, than the Prime Minister and the Government do today and daily.

**Mr. Foster:** You don't believe this.

**Mr. Gustafson:** The Prime Minister asked us to report to him, which we did. He has been very sensitive.

**Mr. Boudria:** Do you phone him in the morning before breakfast?

**Mr. Gustafson:** The Prime Minister met recently with some 25 farm groups across Canada in Vancouver. I heard farm group after farm group commend the Prime Minister on the