

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau: —not an Opposition which is absolutely determined to be negative about everything.

Mr. Broadbent: I would be happy to send over to the Prime Minister a list of a half a dozen farm groups representing farmers on the Prairies who are opposed to this policy. I say to the Prime Minister that he should check his numbers as well. He will find out that under this agreement the CPR intends in fact to spend less in the coming fiscal year for our railway system than it spent in the recent past under the Crow. Instead of doing their share, they will be doing even less than their share, and we in this Party do not accept that.

REQUEST THAT FARMERS BE POLLED ON ISSUE

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, if the Prime Minister is really committed to living up to his promise in the House to do what the farmers want to have done in western Canada, will he not go to the farmers? Will he not take the proposal which he had his Minister reveal in Winnipeg today instead of in the House, put it into a plebiscite, send it out to every prairie farmer, and hear what the farmers of Canada have to say on it?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the New Democratic Party is making two contradictory proposals. First he would want the Minister to be in the House today, and then he wants us to take it to the farmers.

Mr. Broadbent: Can't he do both?

Mr. Trudeau: The Minister has chosen to take it to the farmers, who have a more open mind on this subject than the Hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party.

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AGRICULTURE

GOVERNMENT POSITION ON CREDIT LEGISLATION

Hon. John Wise (Elgin): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs I want to direct my question to the Minister of Finance. It is sad that on this so-called historic day we see, as a result of an act of the Government, another nail being driven into the coffin of many grain producers, regardless of whether they be in western Canada or eastern Canada.

We have here in Ottawa today a number of food producers from the Canadian Farmers' Survival Association. I think the reason these people are here today should be obvious to all of us. This Association wants to determine the official position of the Government with reference to the re-enactment or re-statement of the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act, 1934. Would the Minister, on behalf of the Government, provide us with some information on what is the official Government position with respect to that particular Act?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the contribution made to this debate by the Hon. Member for Lambton-Middlesex. He has brought this issue to the attention of the House and of Cabinet in a very forceful, systematic, and constructive way. Various proposals have been put forward, including the one by the Hon. Member for Lambton-Middlesex himself. The Government is examining all of these specific proposals. The Farmers' Survival Association, in particular, suggested the possibility of a number of amendments to the Bankruptcy Act. My colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, is examining this proposal very attentively at the present time. I expect that my colleague will be in a position to make recommendations to his colleagues in the near future in that regard.

Mr. Wise: I appreciate the Minister's very reasonable response to that question.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL

Hon. John Wise (Elgin): Madam Speaker, I recognize that the Hon. Member for Lambton-Middlesex in fact has a Private Member's Bill on this subject. I think the confusion arises from the fact that there have been a fair number of press reports in that part of the country indicating that it is the Government's intention to incorporate that Private Member's Bill into Bill C-12, respecting the Bankruptcy Act, which is now before the House. There have been very clear press reports indicating that that will be done. Could we obtain a concrete assurance from the Minister of Finance that in fact these press reports are true?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I can confirm that the Government has a great deal of sympathy for the type of approach proposed by the Hon. Member for Lambton-Middlesex. However, as I indicated, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is examining the detailed implications of such a measure, and he is expected to report to Cabinet in the near future.

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RAILWAYS

CROWSNEST PASS RATE—ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Madam Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of State for Economic Development to clarify some questions concerning the announcement made today in Winnipeg. It has already been pointed out that the announcement is a very complex one. Also I suggest to the Minister that it is incomplete in the sense that a working group, comprised of bureaucrats and producer organizations, will be put in place to decide how the money will be distributed to producers. Could the Minister enlighten us as to what kind of process that will be? Is the working group in place? When will it report? What are its terms of