

Committee Reports

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin).

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, my comments will be brief in that I wish to hear from the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—

Mr. Benjamin: Regina West.

Mr. Tobin: He claims that he represents Regina and Winnipeg some days so I made a choice.

I wish to make a brief comment. I come from a part of the country in which we do not have as large an agricultural base as that which exists in the ridings of Hon. Members who have spoken this afternoon. However, I do have a goodly number of farmers who are struggling to build an agricultural base in my province where the agricultural tradition is not a long one and where the industry is not all that developed. I speak of the west coast of that great Province of Newfoundland. In particular, I speak of areas such as Cormack, the Humber Valley and the Codroy Valley in Newfoundland where farmers are struggling to make a go of it. As one who does not profess to have a great deal of knowledge—at least as much knowledge as I would like—about this industry and as one who has sat today in this House in order to broaden that fledgling base of information which I do have, I found a great cloud of darkness and confusion being lifted as I listened to the eloquent words of the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria) and, indeed, the words of the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo), as they made clear to me something which I found difficult to comprehend. That is to say that we actually have before us a report from a committee of Parliament containing the recommendations of all three Parties with regard to improving the lot of those primary producers in the country who give so much and put so much back into the land. Having produced this report, and having made eight recommendations in a spirit of non-partisanship, reform, renewal, hope, help and recognition of the contribution of farmers, we now have Members opposite refusing to implement the proposals put forward during a quiet, serious, sober and responsible moment by all three Parties.

I can only say that is a shattering realization for a Member such as myself who does not have a great deal of knowledge about this industry. I say that from the point of view of a Member who presumed that work in this place was goodwill from every corner attempting to improve the lot of all. It is a shattering experience, one from which I hope I shall be able to recover in due course.

I wish to ask the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell if he will join with me in stepping aside in order to allow my good friend from Regina and Winnipeg to give us the benefit of his wisdom this afternoon until four o'clock.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, briefly, I wish to thank the Hon. Member for his excellent remarks. Without speaking any further, I know, of course, that the Minister of State for Transport (Mrs. Blais-Grenier) would want me to say all kinds of things with respect to transportation issues. However, I will

delay those remarks for the moment in order to give an opportunity to the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) to speak. He is obviously knowledgeable with respect to agricultural issues. He will give us the benefit of the information which he is willing to share with us at the moment.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, my experience in the House so far has been that whenever there has been a unanimous report from a parliamentary committee placed before the House a motion for concurrence has been moved and the mover spoke for a few minutes. Then, there would be some kind of agreement through various means with respect to there being no further debate and the House would unanimously adopt the report in concurrence with what Members from all Parties on the committee had to say. Today, that has not been the case.

There is not any other sector in our economy which has had to take lower prices and deal with higher costs than our farming and fishing sectors. All other sectors of the economy, whether it be doctors, lawyers, trade union members, bankers or whoever else have been able to set prices. They were price-setters and not price-takers. Members of our agricultural and fishing communities have had to be price-takers while their costs have increased.

The report which is being discussed attempts to deal with this unfair situation in our economy. The report deals with the problem of the capital gains exemption regarding farmers. In order to utilize this exemption a farmer would have to quit farming. A fisherman who wishes to take advantage of the capital gains exemption would have to quit fishing in order to do so. However, a speculator in real estate and land only has to sell a property to someone else for a capital gain and take advantage of the exemption. We have always advocated that as long as a farm, fishing or small business enterprise remains within the family there should be a \$500,000 exemption. We tried to persuade the previous Government in this respect. It would not go along with us. However, the Party which now forms the Government thought it was a great idea a couple of years ago. We have not heard anything with respect to this subject since. It will give the \$500,000 break to any and every one with respect to capital gains.

I invite the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker) to blow the dust off his copy of the Carter Commission Report of 1966. A buck is a buck no matter how one earns it. When it is earned through speculative capital gains it should be taxable from the very first dollar. In the case of a family farm, a family business or a family fishing operation which stays within the family and is passed from one generation to the next, then surely capital gains should not apply unless and until that farm, fishing or small business enterprise leaves the hands of the family and is sold for a capital gain.

Another matter which needs to be dealt with is that with respect to the requirement upon financial lending institutions to renegotiate loans which are out to the farming and fishing communities in the country and implement interest rates of 8 per cent, as is recommended by members of the committee. There are still some loans out there with interest rates of 18