

colleague, the Minister of State, has met with the sugar-beet people—sometimes in the provinces, not always in Ottawa—and that he has been meeting with them already this week. The best I can do is to say that, as soon as the final decision is made, I will announce it. I think I am going to adopt a self-denying ordinance not even to hint as to when I think the decision might be made, because obviously my record in that respect is not what my honourable friend would hope.

Hon. H. A. Olson: Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question. Does the Leader of the Government expect that there will be a sugar-beet crop seeded in 1986?

Senator Roblin: As I have already stated, my colleague is discussing the question of the future of the sugar-beet industry with those concerned. I do not think that I should make any statement at this time because I expect that he will be making one shortly.

Senator Olson: Does the government leader have any idea whether government policy will support the seeding of a crop? That is what I am asking him. I understand that he cannot provide all of the details, but my question is: Are we going to have a crop or have we now reached the stage where this government has written the sugar-beet industry off?

Senator Roblin: My honourable friend will just have to possess his soul in patience. As soon as I have an answer to his question, I will give it to him.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON HERBICIDE PRICING—DEBATE ADJOURNED

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the fourth report of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, entitled "Herbicide Pricing".

Hon. Jack Marshall: Honourable senators are aware that, on behalf of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, I tabled, on February 13, the fourth report of that committee respecting herbicide pricing. I rise to say a few words about that report and to give honourable senators the opportunity to respond to it.

I should first like to pay tribute to the members of the committee, particularly those members who are more inclined towards issues concerning agriculture, for persevering at the committee meetings while we were dealing with the study on the marketing of fish and, at the same time, sporadically tried to deal with the herbicide pricing report which arose out of the earlier committee report entitled "Soil at Risk". Even though they were, predominantly, members of the opposition, I want to thank them for bearing with the committee and its deliberations in such a way as to enable it to reach its conclusions and finish its report on "Soil at Risk".

In that report, honourable senators, the committee concluded that excessive tillage is a major cause of soil degradation. It also concluded that, because of high costs and low market

returns, many farmers cannot afford to implement what they recognize as needed conservation practices. Switching to reduced tillage requires greater amounts of herbicides to produce cash generating crops that can make the difference between financial survival and bankruptcy for many farmers. It was recognized by the committee that greater herbicide use entails higher costs, which constitute a restraint to widespread adoption of this conservation practice. It was also recognized that an additional restraint to the adoption of reduced tillage is the belief of farmers that herbicides are overpriced.

After hearing many witnesses from farm groups, chemical companies and the government, the committee concluded that registration of herbicides as it is now enforced is no longer acceptable. The cost of testing products for registration has become onerous, leaving the way open only to very large companies to be able to afford them. The committee believes that altering product-specific registration and increasing competition in the farm chemical industry by opening the way to smaller companies, through the introduction of compulsory licensing and a system of royalties, can, in the end, help to reduce costs to the farmer.

The committee also examined evidence and concluded that there is a need for the Department of Agriculture to give a mandate to and to allocate sufficient resources to the Inputs and Technology Division of that department for the purpose of maintaining a permanent and on-going record of farm chemical prices in Canada and to examine, on an on-going basis, the implications of farm chemical regulations, registration and pricing for the farm population and the industry.

● (1540)

Finally, it is hoped that the recommendations in the report—which is evidently receiving positive response across the country—will be implemented for the benefit of farmers and the industry.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

On motion of Senator Molgat, debate adjourned.

The Senate adjourned during pleasure.

At 4.45 p.m. the sitting of the Senate was resumed.

The Senate adjourned during pleasure.

ROYAL ASSENT

The Right Honourable Brian Dickson, The Chief Justice of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, having come and being seated at the foot of the Throne, and the House of Commons having been summoned, and being come with their Deputy Speaker, the Honourable the Deputy Governor General was pleased to give the Royal Assent to the following bills: