

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

is known as a corroborative evidence concept. It means that if you catch five guys robbing a bank—they are caught with all the cash in their hands—and if you take the matter into court and only one guy gives evidence against the other four, the court will not accept that evidence because there is no corroborative evidence from someone other than an accomplice. You need someone else to corroborate the evidence.

We have the evidence of the cash in the hands. If they cashed those cheques, we want that evidence. We know they did but we would like to see it officially from the government. We know the orders were sent out that they must not work even on their job let alone politically. They disobeyed that. We know the money came from a fund that belonged to the farmers.

We feel that we, as Canadians, have done our duty in the legal course, stymied by this tendency not only of civil servants but of legal civil servants following the well known principle of CYA to cover themselves with paper in this type of letter.

This issue cannot die. We have before parliament a motion on the part of government to repeal the PFAA. In 1975 I asked parliament, and the government acceded, because it took it out, to take out the repeal of the PFAA from this House until this criminal fraud matter was cleared up, and not only the charges of criminal fraud, the documents about which the hon. member is after, meaning types of statements similar to what I read into the record regarding the whole file, but also political fraud. He hinted at it.

We want to find out whether the director sent the letter as ordered by the minister's office to every person, saying that he must not participate in any activity whatsoever, either legitimate or otherwise, before the election. Was that letter sent out?

Second, we would like to talk to the supervisors. Why did they refuse to sign those expense vouchers? Third, we would like to ask the staff, the people in the office in Regina, why it was, when this got into the hands of the police, that just before Christmas all the girls who had worked in that office for years, close to pension, were suddenly dismissed. What was happening in that office that would make them want to dismiss those secretaries who had been there for years? This is not criminal fraud. It is not required in this question.

We would like to ask the minister before we repeal this legislation why they kept a director of PFAA on staff, paid him \$25,000 a year, yet locked him out of his own office and did not allow him in there. Why?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired. Is there consent to allow the hon. member to complete his remarks?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious subject. We would like to ask a whole series of questions. It is not criminal fraud but political fraud. Why were the payments made under the summer fallow

[Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain).]

program in 1972 before the election and the farmers then told they had been overpaid and had to pay part of it back?

● (1740)

We would like to ask about any of the special instructions which were sent out—why some people who were overpaid were treated differently from others. And in the 1974 election, when they were overpaid before the election, all the farmers got their money. But after the election was over they were told they had been overpaid and would have to give some back. What were the instructions which allowed that in certain cases they would negotiate, and what were the terms of those negotiations under which they would not have to pay back what they owed the government? This is not criminal fraud. It is up to us as members of parliament to try to get it out of the government when they come before the Committee on Privileges and Elections. But we cannot take the question before the Committee on Privileges and Elections until the matter of the criminal fraud is cleared up.

I know the police are angry at the incompetence of the men in the Attorney General's office in presenting the case. I know the people in the Attorney General's office don't believe the police gave all the evidence they could have given. But I do not think that on a sensitive political matter like this, affecting not only the taxpayers' money but the farmers' money, that any Attorney General, for whatever reason, should have denied justice to the people of Canada.

This man who was charged with criminal fraud should have a chance to be tried by judge and jury. That is why it is important to the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers) that we get access to these things because we are dealing with documents that are official—not just information we know about. We have had telephone conversations with the various people involved, and so on.

Our request is a reasonable one and does not affect the question of security of the state. It is not a question affecting the relationship between the law officers of the Crown and the minister. It is a question of getting documents which are similar to the one from which I have just quoted. We have a job to do in Saskatchewan as well, to straighten out this question of legal niceties and technicalities being used as devices to keep justice from being done. If we are to do our job as citizens in Saskatchewan it would be a big help if the government in Ottawa did not deny us what we believe to be a reasonable request, access to the four or five documents which give us the facts of each case so that the people will know it is not an isolated case but part of a wider plan. There may have been others over and above the five, but the documents we want are on the five that are actually tangible cases.

I believe reasonable people would say that there is nothing in these documents beyond the fact that they acted in this case against orders, it was improper, illegal, and they got the money and cashed it. That is all. They stole it. They call it criminal fraud. But we have another job—one we cannot do until we clear up the criminal fraud. If we are to do our duty here and bring the matter before the Committee on Privileges and