

not recovered from the shock in terms of the reception he got. In his absence I wish to ask the Minister of Finance a question concerning something that he could do now, that would provide benefits for the West.

He is aware that grain prices are down by some 6 per cent this year. He is aware that bankruptcies in agriculture all across Canada, particularly in the West, are up by more than 100 per cent over last year. Considering that the federal taxes of all types that remain on a litre of diesel fuel or gasoline amount to about 6 per cent, will the Minister do something concrete for western farmers and, I say, for fishermen who have the same problem, by removing this tax?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Welcome aboard! Better late than never.

Mr. Shields: Where have you been, Ed?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Conservatives are getting away from their shock. I would like to tell the Hon. Member that the federal Government has been contributing to the well-being of western farmers to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. As a matter of fact, through the Crow rate benefits and other benefits, the benefit granted to western farmers is getting close to a billion dollars in the course of the last year.

In terms of our commitment to the welfare of western farmers, I do not think that the Government has any lesson to take from any of the Opposition Parties. There is no doubt in my mind in that regard.

My friend knows that the gasoline used by farmers is eligible for reimbursement of some federal taxes and the farmers are resorting to this opportunity that has been made available to them over the years. I am sure that farmers will continue to use that particular opportunity.

Mr. Broadbent: The farmers will be more than a little amused—in fact they will not be amused at all—to hear the Minister say that the Government has been aiding them in the West, particularly when their bankruptcies are up more than 150 per cent year over last year. They can do without that kind of assistance from the federal Government.

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE FOR FARMERS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, considering that the removal of all remaining taxes at the federal level on gasoline and fuel would amount to approximately \$190 million, in terms of its impact on the federal treasury, which is almost exactly the same amount the Minister gave to the oil companies in his most recent Budget, will he show some justice and fairness, apply a consistent standard here, and give the farmers the kind of assistance that they need today?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would be very surprised if the western farmers would listen to the advice of the Hon. Member and do without the assistance they receive from the federal Government, whether it is in the form of Crow rate benefits, in the form of crop insurance, or in

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the form of the very many programs that exist in terms of price stabilization and others which come under the Minister of Agriculture in particular.

As I have said, the support that is being provided by the Government of Canada runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars every year. I would invite my friend to look at those figures and seriously consider whether he is recommending that we do away with those programs.

Mr. Broadbent: The Minister is a little more confused than usual. We are not talking about doing away with the minimum number of programs the Government has to aid farmers. We are talking about providing some justice that is comparable to what the Government gives to the big companies, particularly the oil companies. We want some justice for the farmers.

GOVERNMENT'S POSITION

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Farmers face increased costs, their prices are going down, and their bankruptcies are increasing at an alarming rate. Since the removal of this tax by the federal Government would provide the typical grain farmer with about \$2,500 in assistance that he badly needs this year, will the Government, just for once, deliver on its commitment to western Canada and remove this tax?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to add to the previous answers that I have given. The Hon. Member does not seem to have understood them. I invite him to read them and maybe he will realize that we have covered the point extensively in the previous answers.

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CANADIAN UNITY INFORMATION OFFICE

ISSUANCE OF DOCUMENT—ROLE OF MINISTER OF LABOUR

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Justice. He will know that at a cost of approximately \$158,000 the most flagrantly partisan political document was issued. His Department is responsible for the document.

In this document the Minister of Labour asserts that he is responsible for eight South Shore Quebec ridings. There are pictures of all Liberal MPs and, with respect to one Member, the Member for Chateauguay, it is asserted by a constituent that he has acted really like a father watching over his family to see that it lacks nothing.

The head of the CUIO has stated that the Minister of Justice approved this document although it was instigated by the Minister of Labour. That occurred in February. Will the Minister of Justice tell us what conversation went on with the Minister of Labour, whether he approves of this document, and how he can so dishonour the high office he has by using it for such a mean spirited partisan purpose?