

S. O. 31

clearly at the Conservative convention, but it seems the government's policy is to ignore its own convention.

The government is taking money out of the pockets of farmers. Furthermore it is not only the 18 million bucks or the 27 million bucks, but the farmers of Canada know very well what this government means when it starts talking about market driven and self reliant. That means this government is planning to leave farmers high and dry in this country and farmers are not going to put up with it, including Conservative farmers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We have a very short time for questions and comments from the minister.

Mr. Mayer: Mr. Speaker, I want to make three brief points. There has been reference today and yesterday to the fact that the government, if not directly stated certainly implied, is breaking the law by not providing cash advances under the present legislation.

Hon. members I know would not want to mislead the House. That is not the case. The legislation says that under certain conditions the minister may provide cash advances. It does not in any way state that the minister shall. So let there be no illusion. There is no law being broken by cash advances not being available because the legislation says the minister may.

Second, the member said that we are the only country in the world to reduce expenditures on agriculture. The hon. member should know that the U.S. is proposing to reduce expenditures on agriculture by something like \$1 billion. To the extent that he makes the point, that is certainly not accurate.

Last, the New Brunswick potato agency, as I understand it, has indicated that it will make use of this program once it is passed with interest payable, and the potato people in Prince Edward Island where the hon. member comes from have been non-committal. They have not said they would not use it; they have not said they would use it, the point again being that the sooner we pass this legislation the sooner farmers will have the opportunity to have cash advances once again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A very short reply from the member for Prince Albert—Churchill River.

Mr. Funk: Mr. Speaker, the minister may well be correct with regard to the technicality of the law but western farmers assumed that when John Diefenbaker

told them in 1957 that this money would be there every year, that it would be there, and I think the minister should remember the moral obligation that John George Diefenbaker left upon the Conservative Party when he introduced this legislation originally.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It being one o'clock I do now leave the Chair until two o'clock.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

VIA RAIL

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, our most famous transcontinental train, the Canadian, was created as part of the terms of entry of British Columbia into Confederation in 1871. The transcontinental route is not a frivolity; it is a constitutional commitment made to the people of British Columbia.

The geniuses in cabinet apparently believe that they can dishonour that commitment to British Columbia on economic grounds. They should, however, have read VIA's annual report that says on page 10, "The Canadian, our western transcontinental train—this one train generates \$100 million for the tourist industry each year".

They should also have read the official cabinet background document tabled here yesterday before they cut the Victoria-Courtenay route. That document says that the Vancouver Island service will increase by 42 per cent in riders. They cut a route which their document says will produce a profit.

Only a Conservative Government would break a constitutional commitment to British Columbia and, in the process, destroy two train services which generate millions of dollars in profit.

Sir John A. Macdonald, the first Conservative Prime Minister and the first Prime Minister of our country, must be spinning in his grave.