

Committee Reports

all that the Conservative Government, through its spokesman, the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills, has found to shelve this report, which was approved unanimously by all committee members, including the Conservatives.

Why reject the work of the committee members? We can now see a bit more clearly what the Conservative Government is trying to do. The Conservative Members who were acting in good faith and who thought that they had a role to play as Members of Parliament went to the meetings of the Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, analyzed the situation, heard representations by many people and groups and sat from March 6 to 27 for one, two, three or six sittings. They heard the advice of independent experts, they found that certain things were reasonable, and with the NDP and Liberal Members, they made certain recommendations to this House. Now, the Government sees that it is stuck with recommendations made by its own Members and it is trying to shelve those recommendations. It is the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills, the great defender of Western sugar beet producers, who is now stuck with the dirty job of proposing that the report be shelved so that the Government can get rid of recommendations made by its own Conservative Members which it does not want to implement.

These recommendations contained in the report tabled in this House on the 1st . . . Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member to my right can rise later and use his 20 minutes—

Mr. Boudria: To the extreme right!

Mr. Garneau: Yes, to the extreme right. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are other Members, including the one who used to be Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance before losing his job, who could perhaps tell us at what date the Quebec farm producers will benefit from the rubber cheque of the Minister of Public Works (Mr. La Salle).

I meet with Quebec farmers occasionally and this very directly involves financing, Mr. Speaker. I meet with farmers who tell me: We voted for the Conservatives because the present MP for Joliette, the present Minister of Public Works promised us a \$13 million cheque. During the election he was going around waving a cheque that big, on which this was printed: "Pay \$13 million to pork producers". Mr. Speaker, today is December 13, 1985, a year and a few months have gone by, nearly a year and a half since Quebec farmers, pork producers were promised that \$13 million cheque, and they are still waiting for it. It seems that the cheque from the Minister of Public Works has bounced. The usual term for it is a "rubber cheque". I hope Tory Members from Quebec will address that matter.

But there are very serious financial problems in farming. There are people who say that this only concerns Western Canada. It is true that in Western Canada, because of the drought situation and the grasshoppers which plagued a major part of the crops, many farmers are in dire straits. But that

problem also exists in other parts of Canada. This is why Members who sat on the Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic matters have been well advised to make specific recommendations to the Government concerning farm financing, and it is clear that if the report were implemented, many sectors of the farm industry, many types of products and most farming areas in Canada would benefit.

Of course, even if there is no direct reference to farm marketing boards with respect to tobacco producers, it is clear that those producers, who were on Parliament Hill a few times these last few days, would benefit from the financing proposals that were made or the implementation of some of the provisions also concerning the interpretation of Section 31, for instance, by Revenue Canada. I am sure that many farm producers would benefit if we could only respond to the rather serious issue that was raised in that report concerning farm bankruptcies and the way we treat people in difficulty during the conciliation period, that is between the moment when the financial institution says it will tighten the screw and the moment when a concrete and specific step is taken.

• (1430)

Everywhere we went in Western Canada, all agricultural communities mentioned that problem—and on their behalf I raise the issue before the Government Members—the seizure of property and machinery practically carried out overnight in some cases. They are not trying to suggest that financial institutions have no rights, but they would like to be able to talk things over and see whether it might not be possible to find alternative solutions, not so drastic solutions which would give a fighting chance to farmers who find themselves in a financial bind—and they do not deny that they are in trouble—more often than not because they acted on the advice of Government officials and experts from financial institutions. All they want is a little more time, something along the line of the private Member's Bill sponsored by my colleague from Algoma (Mr. Foster). I hope the Government will take it under consideration, a form of cushioning measure we might say, to avoid situations such as a farmer being seized overnight and losing some of his machinery or part of his herd. The report does contain very good suggestions, but the Government might not be prepared to implement them holus-bolus. What we would like is to have somebody from the Government side—like the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) or his representative, or again the person responsible for the wheat pool, or others like the Parliamentary Secretary—who would tell us why the recommendations cannot be accepted, including those concerning financial matters. Perhaps they will have perfectly acceptable reasons.

On thing for sure is that those recommendations were drafted after long studies and consultations with a number of experts. Should the Government choose not to implement the eight recommendations, or only some of them, it seems quite