

Borrowing Authority Act

Mr. Speaker: Are there any questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson).

Miss Aileen Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, as one who represents an urban riding it is always of particular interest to hear the problems of the wheat producing area described by a veteran Member who knows that area, has represented it very well and understands the issues. I would like to ask the Hon. Member who has, in fact, suggested some additional expenditures for the Government at this time, whether he is in favour of some kind of bond issue for farmers who are in particular difficulties at this time, e.g. the agri-bond that was part of the Conservative political platform in the last election?

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the lady for her kind and complimentary remarks. I have one problem with it though; whenever a Conservative or Liberal does that I wonder what it was that I said that was wrong. It is like getting a favourable editorial in the *Leader Post*; I must have done something wrong. I do thank the lady for her remarks. Not knowing too much if anything, about it, I think the idea of agri-bonds is sort of a desperation gasp, a last gasp effort put forward as some way or mechanism of helping the agricultural community. That does nothing more than increase debt cost on the Government which in turn will pass those costs on to taxpayers without having really solved the problem, not only of income equity, but income stability of the agricultural community. I am not suggesting I am opposed to them. If they are put forward in some concrete legislation my colleagues and I—my colleague from Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) is much more expert on that than I am—would be prepared to look at them with some consideration, sympathy and objectivity. I cannot say that we might end up agreeing. If it were to help the agricultural community in a positive manner then okay. It is like a rabbit track that runs off on a side direction, and really still does not deal with the point I just made about the stability of income, and being in a position to compete with grain producers in other countries, what is the point?

Miss Nicholson (Trinity): Mr. Speaker, it seems clear in the House those of us who represent central Canada really have to be very much more concerned with the difficulties of grain producers than at any other time, because quite clearly the international pressures are worse than they have been in many years. Recognizing that, has the Hon. Member any suggestions on how to make Canadians in general more aware of the need for greater sharing, and possibly for remedial programs for western Canadians?

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member. That is a good question. I thought we had made some headway in that regard. I remind the Hon. Member, and the Government House Leader will recognize too, that during the debate on the abolition of the Crow's Nest Pass rate I was very pleased and proud of the fact that members from my Party, from British Columbia and Ontario got up and spoke two, three, four times to fight to preserve the Crow rate for western grain producers, as did members of the Conservative Party

from eastern and western Canada. I know there was some sympathy from Members of the Government side at that time for that same thing. I do not think for one moment that the people in downtown Toronto, or Montreal, or Vancouver would oppose for one moment any kind of a measure that would provide equitable treatment for their fellow citizens in other parts of the country. We never have. If there is any one thing that has made this country work as well as it has, it is the fact that we have, in many instances, by way of various kinds of programs and legislation brought in regimes that took into account our geography and our climate, where our people are located and where they produce and manufacture their goods. Whether it involved transportation subsidies or programs of other kinds in other parts of the economy, they were designed to hold this nation together, but also to keep us in the marketplace internationally. That is why I submit there is a need for a deficiency payment on grain, and from time to time it may be necessary on corn, beans, fish, barley, livestock, chicken, or for any product in respect of which our international competitors treat us unfairly. It is totally unfair to ask our agricultural producers to compete with those countries' treasuries. They are more than willing to compete with the farmers of other countries. We have tens of thousands of farmers in this country who have been more than efficient. They know how to produce efficiently. They are the best farmers in the world. However, when they are victimized by the treasuries and consortia of other nations, it is up to this country to pick up the difference so that they can compete on what the Tories like to call a level playing field.

● (1500)

Mr. Speaker: Questions or comments?

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MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S.O. 29

LOWER GRAIN PRICES—SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: Before resuming debate, earlier today the Hon. Member for Humboldt—Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) requested an emergency debate under Standing Order 29. I deferred my decision at that time. I am now ready to rule on the matter.

Members will be aware that the House adopted an order on March 26, 1986, by unanimous consent, setting up a Special Committee on the Pricing of Domestic Wheat and its Products, with wide ranging powers, to report to the House not later than Friday, May 9, 1986. Members will also be aware that the membership for this Special Committee was struck yesterday and that the committee is organizing today.

Standing Order 29(5) states that the Chair must consider: "The probability of the matter being brought before the House within reasonable time by other means". I must therefore reject the application.