

driven to inquire into the possibility of obtaining a French registration for their boats to allow them to fish on the south coast of Newfoundland without the danger of being arrested by our Government. A Newfoundland fisherman raising a French flag! *Vive le Terre-Neuve libre.*

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, what negotiating position does the Government have left when it has already given the French everything they have asked for?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, we would not be required to give the French what they insist on in the disputed area had a previous Government not ignored this very important problem. I might add that an agreement to negotiate an interim fishing arrangement will be announced within hours and the Member, I hope, will be well pleased.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

FUEL TAX REBATE—DENIAL TO FARMERS USING VEHICLES ON HIGHWAYS

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Prairie farmers are being denied their tax rebate on fuel used on the highway in the business of farming. As part of the 1987 Budget will the Minister consider amending the Excise Tax Act so as to base the rebate not on artificial considerations such as whether it is used on highway or off highway, but rather on the essential consideration as to whether the fuel is used in the business of farming?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member knows, there was some difficulty, after we announced the fuel tax rebate, with the allocation of what was on and what was off highway use. Last year the Minister of National Revenue changed the procedure to allow for what is admittedly an arbitrary arrangement but one that we felt was fairly close to what would be the normal allocation between on highway and off highway use. We have tried to meet the objections of the farmers in this regard by a simple administrative change, but I would remind the Hon. Member that we have moved a long way on the fuel tax rebate. We have also seen interest rates fall close to five percentage points over the past two and a half years and that has made the life of the farmer an awful lot better.

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF REBATE

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that farmers have already excluded their personal use from their calculations and the Department is still taking a percentage of what is left. I do not think that is fair. Will the Minister reconsider the matter in the Budget?

Oral Questions

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I understand the concern expressed by the Hon. Member. Other Members have made the same views known to me. As the Hon. Member has asked, I will take their views under consideration in the preparation leading up to the Budget.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

CREDIT CARD INTEREST RATES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Robert Toupin (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance and concerns his statement last week that the bank rate had been brought down to 7.74 per cent. Could the Minister explain why Canadian consumers are still paying interest rates of up to 28 per cent on credit cards which is a spread of more than 20 per cent? What specifically does the Minister intend to do to correct this situation?

[English]

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, regarding credit card interest rates, the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs is going to report on that very soon and I look forward to acting on that report. I may also remind the Hon. Member that if he will shop around he will see there is an enormous number of rates. Trust companies and banks offer different rates with different conditions. We will, of course, look at the report very carefully, but I do urge the Hon. Member to shop around.

[Translation]

Mr. Toupin: Interest rates are as high as 28 per cent. We could suggest a number of ways to deal with this.

• (1450)

[English]

REQUEST THAT MINISTER IMPOSE CEILING ON CREDIT CARD INTEREST RATES

Mr. Robert Toupin (Terrebonne): Why will the Minister not establish a ceiling on credit card interest rates to protect consumers, as is done in the majority of U.S. States?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Finance)): A ceiling on credit card interest rates is something that will be considered when the committee reports.

An Hon. Member: Well, do it.

Mr. Hockin: We must wait for committees to report.

Mr. Rodriguez: You haven't waited on any so far.