

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

Indeed I do not see much point in continuing in their absence. I had thought that the government would at least extend a certain degree of courtesy to a private member who does not have many occasions to raise questions in the house, because of restrictions under the rules.

Mr. Aiken: There is not a minister present at the moment.

Mr. Korchinski: It is obviously the policy of the government to ignore private members. That is perfectly all right with me. I can raise this question at another time. However this is another example of the arrogance of the government. Not having answered the two questions I raised a couple of days ago I would have thought the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene) would have taken advantage of this opportunity to clear the air and indicate to many farmers what is the situation with regard to the supplementary payments which farmers thought they were going to receive.

It is now almost a year since it was suggested that supplementary payments would be made. The government advertised this in different media. According to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics apparently 450,000 farmers were circularized, and both television and radio carried advertising indicating such payments would be made. All farm organizations, co-operatives and 4-H clubs were also so advised. In addition Farm Letter No. 6 was sent out dealing with this matter, a further letter on June 4, and a third one on August 24.

Many farmers have made application for these supplementary payments. Possibly the officials in the Department of Agriculture may have been swamped with applications but, whatever the reason, they did not even acknowledge receipt of applications. Naturally farmers are concerned about what has happened to their applications. Many have written to me, and during the Easter recess a lot of people asked me what was going on in the department. Surely the minister owes it to the farmers to clear the air and I specifically ask, even though the department might be swamped, that it at least acknowledge receipt of applications.

If the department cannot do that then it should indicate the possible final date when farmers may expect payments. I have one case of a farmer who submitted an application on July 24 last year. He wrote again on

November 14 but got no reply. He wrote a third time on January 6 of this year, then a fourth time on January 31, and finally he wrote to me.

These people want to know what is happening. They do not have secretaries to write for them. They think the department should have sufficient staff to carry out its obligations. They ask how is it that when it comes to income tax time there is always sufficient staff to deal with forms when the government is collecting money, but when it comes to the question of money being paid to farmers there does not seem to be sufficient staff?

There is no use in the minister's telling us that 130,000 farmers have been paid. There are many more who have not been paid and they want to know if the department has received their applications. They want to know whether they should submit other applications, and how long they should wait. They do not know whether there will be another payment in a few months time. They do not know whether there has been a first or second payment, and I ask the minister for an explanation on this problem.

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Speaker, as a member of the committee that originally set up this system of raising questions on the adjournment motion, I feel in duty bound to rise on a point of order. It is absolutely useless for an hon. member to raise a question at this time when there is neither a minister nor a parliamentary secretary present on the government side to answer the question. At one time this evening there was not one minister or parliamentary secretary in the house.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Aiken: I see one minister has now returned to the house but I could not let this situation go by without commenting on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I should advise the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Aiken) to read the conditions of provisional standing order 39A, particularly that section at the top of page 38 of the provisional standing orders.

Mr. Aiken: I have read it.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 10.32 p.m.