

this question. We in this House sometimes tend to look at events from day to day, we tend to consider how the news media reports our daily activities and how they report the current crises which arise from time to time in the House, and overlook basic questions concerning fundamental freedoms which we have come to accept in our country. One such freedom is the freedom of the general public to have absolutely unequivocal and unfettered access to reports concerning the proceedings of the parliament of Canada and the legislatures of Canada.

The words of the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont, he being a supporter of the government party and aware of the activities of government from his vantage point, underline how necessary it is for members of this House to support the motion moved. Let us allow the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections to assess any possibility of abuse, or the possibility of the government arbitrarily restricting the reporting of the proceedings of this House and the availability of such reports to the general public.

Sir, I submit that since you have heard each of the representatives of the parties in this House speak in support of the motion, you should give the matter serious consideration—which I know you will do—accept the proposition that a prima facie case has been made and thereby allow us to investigate in the standing committee this serious and fundamental question. After the committee has considered the matter it can report back to the House, and the House can, if it wishes, approve the committee's report.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I said earlier that I was awaiting the intervention of the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont (Mr. Joyal). I will give the matter further consideration and very likely give my decision on Tuesday at three o'clock.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### FINANCE, TRADE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Eighth report of Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs—Mr. Clermont.

[English]

#### TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Fourth report of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications—Mr. Campbell.

[Editor's Note: For text of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

## Food Policy AGRICULTURE

### NATIONAL FOOD POLICY

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government and, in particular, my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Abbott) who will also be making a statement, I am pleased to table a discussion paper outlining the principal elements of a national food strategy to reinforce the basic objectives of our existing food policy. I should stress that while the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and I are most directly involved in the formulation of any such strategy, other ministers, most especially those representing Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Chrétien), National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde), Fisheries and the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) and, of course, Finance (Mr. Macdonald), have contributed to this document.

Over the past months concern has been expressed in certain quarters about a national food policy. I have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that such a policy does exist and has existed for years, but it is clear that until the objectives are emphasized publicly, and the strategy for attaining those goals defined, there will be many who will not be content. As Minister of Agriculture I am very much aware of the responsibility that must be taken by the government to ensure the viability of any policy which touches Canadians at all levels and in all regions.

Over the years the role of agriculture has broadened and its scope has increased. Today agriculture is intricately linked with food marketing in the larger agribusiness context involving the processing, packaging and distributing sectors. One in every four Canadians is now employed somewhere in the food production, processing and distribution chain or in the industries supplying machinery, fertilizer and other food industry inputs. Out of every consumer dollar spent on food, 62 cents goes to the food manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors and retailers. There are slightly more than 200,000 workers employed in the food processing sector today, making it the largest manufacturing industry in Canada.

Despite the decline in the number of fishermen and farmers who constitute the very foundation of the food industry, the industry continues to grow. Why? Because of the greatly increased productivity of those farmers and fishermen who remain. They have discovered that there is no room in today's economic climate for the inefficient producer. This high level of productivity has kept Canada in the enviable position of being one of the very few net exporters of food in the world today. In 1976, agricultural exports totalled \$4 billion, and we had a \$1 billion surplus which helped offset some of the adverse impact of the deficit in other areas—especially oil.

So food is big business. More than that, apart from the cash value it is an industry which forms an integral part of this country's economic, industrial and social life. The farmer on the land is the first link in a chain which brings the food from the farm to the table in a form that is nutritious, wholesome and affordable. Today's food industry has evolved to meet the increasingly sophisticated demands of today's consumer.