

Hon. Hazen Argue (Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board): Honourable senators, I am not in a position to give that information to the honourable senator. That is a confidential document, I believe, at the present time. I do not believe it has been produced anywhere, and I am certainly not going to endeavour to produce a document in the Senate on behalf of the Department of Agriculture. The whole question of compensation on the grain embargo is under active consideration, and that document and other representations are before ministers for their consideration.

Senator Murray: I am not asking that the cabinet document, as such, be released, although I understand that, in the spirit of freedom of information or, as it is called now, access to information, we are supposed to have access to background material of this kind. I would ask the minister to take that into consideration and to make the necessary inquiries in the Privy Council Office or of the proper authorities. I am not asking that the document be tabled today, but I am asking him whether the Department of Agriculture has found that there is a loss to prairie farmers attributable to the grains embargo against the U.S.S.R.

Senator Argue: A number of studies have been made. One was made by the Department of Agriculture, and it was before the cabinet for consideration. I believe it is fair to say that all of the studies I have seen, and have had any access to, indicate that there is a loss that has been calculated, but I am not going to endeavour to say what that precise figure may be.

I am very pleased that Senator Murray has an interest in this question and that he keeps on asking about it. Really, all I can say, apart from the reply to the specific question, is that I do not intend to divulge any figures that may be in that document. The whole question is under active consideration.

Senator Murray: Let me not subtract at all from the minister's pleasure, and let me try to add to it by asking another question, if I may. The minister referred to other studies in addition to the study made by the Department of Agriculture. What other studies is he referring to?

Senator Argue: A couple of university professors, who, I believe, were commissioned by the Province of Saskatchewan, made a study and they came up with certain figures or recommendations. I believe the Library of Parliament, with its facilities, has made a study for a member of the House of Commons. There are other people who have figures. I am not sure how great their study has been or in what depth, but there are many recommendations being made.

Senator Flynn: Not very convincing.

Senator Murray: Are all those studies now before the cabinet, or is the cabinet considering only the study made by the Department of Agriculture? Is the report of the Department of Agriculture included in the general statement made by the minister that all the reports he has seen do acknowledge that there has been a loss to prairie farmers attributable to the grains embargo against the U.S.S.R.?

• (1450)

Senator Argue: The studies are based on assumptions. They are made by the people who are making the studies; and based on their suppositions and propositions, all of the studies have indicated a loss because of the embargo.

Senator Murray: Then, as my final question, may we take it that, as the government now acknowledges that there has been a loss to prairie farmers, there will be financial compensation paid to them in respect of the grains embargo?

Senator Argue: I am not able to add anything more to what I said a moment ago, or a few weeks ago, or a few months ago. The whole question is under active consideration. I continue to be an optimist—

Senator Flynn: In what sense?

Senator Argue: I feel that from the standpoint of the prairie producers the decision will be in their interest.

THE ESTIMATES

INCREASE IN GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of State for Economic Development): Honourable senators, I wish to respond to a question raised on March 2 by Senator Flynn concerning the government's estimates.

I am informed by my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, that the cost of amortization and servicing of the public debt, as outlined in the 1981-82 main estimates is \$12,350 million. Revenue Canada projects the number of filers of T1 tax forms for this same period to be in the order of 15,925,000. Based on this assumption, the cost for each filer of a T1 form would be about \$800.

I would point out, however, that approximately 90 per cent of the debt is financed with Canadian funds. In fact, the interest paid on the debt is a source of income to Canadians.

THE CONSTITUTION

EFFECT OF PROPOSED CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS ON EXISTING LEGISLATION

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, on March 12 Senator Tremblay asked whether the Minister of Justice or the department had prepared a study concerning the effect of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms on federal laws; if so, could the study be tabled in the Senate; and if such a study had not yet been made, did the Department of Justice intend to make such a study shortly?

A study concerning the effect of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has not yet been prepared, but work is now being undertaken by the Department of Justice, in co-operation with other departments and agencies of the government, to examine laws, regulations and practices with a view to identifying those which may be inconsistent with provisions of the charter.

Given the volume of legislation and regulations that exist, this task will take a considerable time, and it will likely be several months before the review and assessment are completed.

Since the purpose of this study is to identify legislative and regulatory measures that may require modifications, rather than tabling the study, the more likely course will be for the government to introduce amending legislation where necessary, or to adopt appropriate modifications to regulations and administrative practices.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

ATLANTIC PROVINCES—PRODUCTION OF IRISH MOSS

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, on March 18 Senator Macquarrie asked a question concerning Irish moss.

Senator Flynn: No!

Senator Perrault: I must repeat what I told the honourable senator on March 17, St. Patrick's Day, that the confidentiality clauses of the Statistics Act preclude the release of any information concerning the value of tonnage of Irish moss produced in the Atlantic provinces. The Statistics Act would, therefore, have to be amended in order to furnish the information that the honourable senator seeks.

[*Later:*]

Hon. G. I. Smith: Honourable senators, may I ask the Leader of the Government a supplementary question on his delayed answer in reply to Senator Macquarrie's question concerning Irish moss? I am not quite clear from the reply—that is probably my fault and no one else's—whether the question referred to the total production of Irish moss in the Atlantic provinces or whether it referred to individual amounts of production by individual producers.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, as I recall, the question asked for statistics involving individual producers. I do not have the honourable senator's original question before me. The answer, however, was that the confidentiality clauses of the Statistics Act preclude the release of any information concerning the value of tonnage of Irish moss produced in the Atlantic provinces. But the other information has also been sought. A number of questions, successively, have been directed to the office of the Minister of Supply and Services to obtain the information, and I regret that for the reasons stated I am unable to provide further information.

Senator Smith: I thank the Leader of the Government for his reply. Since he is seeking further information on the question, would he be prepared to seek sufficient information to let us know what provisions of the Statistics Act prevent the production of the information requested, to which he referred today?

[*Senator Perrault:*]

THE CONSTITUTION

PETITION FROM SOLIDARITÉ QUÉBEC

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, on March 19 Senator Flynn asked a question concerning correspondence allegedly received by the Prime Minister from Solidarité Québec.

Honourable senators, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister did indeed receive a copy of the petition referred to by Senator Flynn. The Prime Minister has no intention of tabling the document in light of the fact that no one in the House of Commons has asked him to do so.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, as a supplementary question in connection with that reply, may I ask the Leader of the Government if he would obtain from the Prime Minister a copy of that petition and table it in this house? Or, possibly, His Honour the Speaker, who had indicated that he had received a copy, could make it available to the Senate.

APPROPRIATION ACTS

GOVERNMENT POLICY RE BUDGETARY DEFICIT

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer in connection with the debate on Appropriation Bills C-62 and C-63. Senator Grosart asked whether, in general terms, it was the policy of the government to decrease the budgetary deficit in the years ahead, as a percentage of GNP, to the 1982-83 target figure of 2.9 per cent. I undertook at that time to try to obtain an answer, or get some information from the government as to its policy on that point.

In obtaining the answer, I have assumed that the specific relationship between the budgetary deficit and the GNP that was mentioned by Senator Grosart was obtained from the Minister of Finance's budget speech of October 28, 1980. The budgetary deficits for future years, contained on page 41 of that document, are projections and, as such, the data and the specific percentage relationships to the gross national product will be subject to some variation.

The general intentions expressed in this same document by the Minister of Finance on the relative size of the deficit are perhaps quite relevant, and I quote:

One of my main tasks as Minister of Finance will be to reduce the very large deficits in the government's accounts to more manageable proportions. This is important not only to restore our flexibility to meet future needs and to slow growth of our interest payments. It is also essential if the rate of inflation is to be brought down. Otherwise we will run the risk of a new outbreak of inflationary pressure. The immediate outlook is for rather slow growth and I, therefore, judge that only a modest reduction in the deficit is needed next year. But larger declines in the deficit will be required as growth speeds up.