

\$16.31 per tonne to \$36.70 per tonne of feed grain transported from Thunder Bay to Charlottetown. I have correspondence from the egg producers in P.E.I. which say they are having problems competing with Ontario and that they desperately need more assistance and more consideration in the area of feed grain freight equalization.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Chairman, I am surprised to hear the member say he has correspondence with egg producers because egg producers are operating on a cost-pricing formula which takes into consideration the cost of feed, their interest charges, taxes, etc, the energy they use and so on. So if their feed is costing them more they are one of the groups which can recoup that cost from the product they sell. He says they cannot compete with Ontario producers but the vast majority of Ontario producers get no feed freight assistance whatsoever. Only in parts of northern Ontario is there any feed freight assistance at all at the present time. In all of southern Ontario, from North Bay southward, I do not believe there is any feed freight assistance whatsoever. There are a lot of people who have this misconception, but all I can say is that poultry producers of any description are properly looked after by a cost-pricing formula.

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Those who choose the free market system to market their hogs and beef have no formula. If the market price is high enough to give them a proper return for their product, then they can pay for their feed. But if the market slumps and feed prices go up, there is no pricing formula and if they lose then they must seek support from the federal government under the agricultural stabilization plan if they are beef producers. And if they are hog producers they must ask for support from the provincial insurance program, which I understand went bankrupt last year because it ran out of funds.

Mr. Gustafson: Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate on agriculture. I represent an agricultural constituency, Assiniboia, which produces more wheat than any other constituency in Canada. I have listened with interest to the remarks of the minister over the past two days, particularly as they have related to his sabbatical leave. During his short sabbatical, the hon. members who sit in front of me, the hon. member for Elgin and the hon. member for Vegreville, did more for agriculture and transportation respectively in eight months than has been done in this country in 12 years.

The farmers of our area want a chance to produce, and I hope the minister will listen to their demands. The *Toronto Star* of today has a headline, "Put Canada to Work". The Economic Council of Canada says that we need to produce. What programs is the minister putting into action which will allow the farmers the opportunity to produce, to see their production marketed and to have their produce transported to market should the situation arise?

The minister was fortunate in a sense that production in the west was down because of the drought. I hope the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Transport will not rest on

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their laurels but continue the work which was begun by the hon. member for Vegreville and the hon. member for Elgin.

Mr. Whelan: What a bunch of nonsense!

Mr. Gustafson: Our farmers have some very special concerns, the first of which is the initial price of wheat. For the past two days the question has been asked again and again, "When is the minister going to announce the initial price increase in grain." We all know it has been selling for as high as \$8 a bushel on the Vancouver market. But the minister says the farmers do not want the money. The minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board is saying that one way or another farmers do not know how to handle their money.

Many young farmers who find themselves in a cost-squeeze situation where it is very hard to pay the high interest rates charged for machinery and repairs to equipment; it is affecting production in general in agriculture today. The farmers are asking the government and the minister's department to jolt the minister for the Wheat Board into action in this regard.

A number of other questions come to mind. I received a letter today from a very concerned farmer in Scout Lake, Saskatchewan, who wanted to know what the government was doing about metric conversion. There is real confusion when the Prime Minister says in the throne speech that he will give special consideration to western Canada because his party has no members in that part of the country. What kind of consideration have we received? The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources wants to take over our resources. The minister responsible for metric conversion has caused confusion in the area. What does the Minister of Agriculture intend to do about metric conversion? The farmers and rural municipalities want to know whether the government will be calling acres hectares in the near future. The CBC has indicated that the chemical companies will be going to metric conversion. I would like the minister to answer on this matter, possibly by letter if there is no time this evening.

Another important area of concern to farmers is land ownership. They are concerned about the capital gains tax and the broken election promise on the evaluation day which is to be updated from 1971 to 1974. With regard to land ownership, does the Minister of Agriculture know that the Saskatchewan government has purchased about one million acres of land in Saskatchewan? Does the minister believe in state ownership? Will this socialist government in Ottawa join the socialist government in Saskatchewan and some day develop an aggressive policy on the ownership of land? This is a very important question to Canadians and the Saskatchewan farmer is particularly concerned. The Saskatchewan government bought up 65,000 quarter sections of prime land through a tax system which will eventually enable the government to take over ownership.

As farmers, we ask for the right to be productive. If the farms are owned by the state, Canada will quickly forget what the word production means. This is an important question which any minister of agriculture in a country such as Canada