

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: I have grave doubts about the propriety of the question. It is not one which can be dealt with by a concise answer, as the house is about to discover and, with the consent of the minister, I will declare the question out of order.

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, if I were to tell the house all the things this government has done to alleviate unemployment it would take me half an hour, but I am prepared to proceed with consent.

Mr. Ellis: With what results?

Mr. Speaker: Order. As I have ruled the question out of order I think the minister will not find it necessary to proceed with his answer, which would undoubtedly develop into the debate which I have already disallowed.

GRAIN**WHEAT—DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS TO WESTERN FARMERS**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Gardiner: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I recognize the right hon. member for Melville. I will see the hon. member for Comox-Alberni presently.

Right Hon. J. G. Gardiner (Melville): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a question supplementary to one which was answered last week. I am not just certain whether it should be addressed to the Minister of Trade and Commerce or the Minister of Finance. A question was asked with respect to whether deficiency payments were likely to be paid on grain from past crops. My understanding is that the answer given was that consideration was being given to the matter. Is consideration being given to the possibility of making such payments, if they are made, on seed grain as well as other grain used for milling purposes?

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, representations were made to the Prime Minister and the members of the wheat committee of the cabinet yesterday by representatives of the western wheat pools with regard to deficiency payments. No decision was reached at that meeting as to what might be done and, as I recall, no mention was made of seed grain.

Mr. Gardiner: May I ask if the minister will give consideration to deficiency payments on seed grain as well as the other grain?

Mr. Churchill: Yes.

[Later:]

Mr. H. R. Argue (Assiniboia): I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Trade and Commerce arising out of the presentation made yesterday to the cabinet by the three western wheat pools, asking for deficiency payments to solve the price-cost squeeze which is crippling western grain growers. Can the minister say when an announcement about a deficiency payment may be made, so this method may be used to alleviate the serious agricultural depression on the prairies?

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, we already had a question on deficiency payments earlier this afternoon. However, if repetition is desirable, may I say that the hon. member is asking for a very quick decision when the representations were only made yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Speaker, on that point I understood the question asked by the hon. member for Melville was whether the same decision would be made covering seed grain as had been made generally on wheat. I have a further question to ask the minister, if I may. Can he say whether or not a second meeting is scheduled with the three western pools on this very subject at a later date?

Mr. Churchill: I am not sure, Mr. Speaker. I had to leave the meeting yesterday a little early, and perhaps arrangements for a second meeting were made after I left. I have not heard of it.

Mr. Argue: This question has been up many times. Can the minister say when an announcement on this question may be forthcoming? Will it be during this session?

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, government policy will be announced in due course.

WHEAT—INQUIRY AS TO INTERIM PAYMENT ON 1956-57 CROP

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. H. Harrison (Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Trade and Commerce, arising out of his statement yesterday that under his guidance grain sales had been accelerated out of all proportion compared with sales under the previous administration. If that is the case, why was an interim payment on wheat not made to western farmers in December? Will one be made at some time in the future, and when?