

AGRICULTURE

GRAIN PRICES—REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. Last week farmers learned that grain prices would be 20 per cent lower in the upcoming crop year. Farm groups like the Southern Alberta Agriculture Stability Action Committee say that farmers will not be able even to get credit to plant a crop this year unless the Government acts. Will the Minister give a commitment today that farmers will get at least the same returns this year as they got in the past crop year so that they may plant a crop, stay on the land, and keep their families together?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the Hon. Member was in the House yesterday or not but that very same question was posed to me by the Hon. Member for Prince Albert. To save the time of the House, I will refer my hon. friend to my answer of yesterday.

REQUEST FOR AGRI-BOND PROGRAM

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Minister is not giving a commitment in this regard. The Minister boasts of his \$46 million program designed to take farmers off the land. I wonder if the Minister can say when he will bring in a low-interest rate agri-bond program designed to keep farmers on the land like the one the Prime Minister promised during the last General Election campaign. I wonder if the Minister could do that before he lifts the moratorium on Farm Credit Corporation foreclosures.

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, at no time did I ever boast about the Canadian Rural Transition Program. The Government simply responded as it has in the past to the wishes and needs of Canadian farmers. I think the program is working extremely well and I think we can take some satisfaction in the fact that the number of applications is much lower, perhaps even 50 per cent lower at this time than was expected.

As to interest rates, I would remind the Hon. Member that when he sat on this side of the House, the Government of which he was a part allowed interest rates to go from 9 per cent to 24 per cent and added an additional 2 per cent—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

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FARM CREDIT CORPORATION

STUDY OF EQUITY FINANCING

Mr. Bill Gottselig (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister is aware that the scope of business decisions farmers can take to manage their agricultural resources properly is constrained by

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the long-term debt they carry. The Farm Credit Corporation has been studying for two years now the possibility of equity financing as one solution to this problem. Would the Minister indicate to the House whether or not the Farm Credit Corporation, by itself or with another institution, will offer equity financing as one solution to farmers' long-term debt problems?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question and I would like to acknowledge it. I fully understand and appreciate the Hon. Member's continuing interest in the farm finance problem. In addition to what we have already done, I am sure the Hon. Member will take some satisfaction in the fact that a federal, provincial and FCC task force is directing its attention to the very option of equity financing. It is my information that this task force will report to me by the end of this month. Personally, I would like to see that information made available not only to the farm leaders but also to the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

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REFUGEES

AMENDMENT OF REGULATIONS

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. As the Minister knows, 19 years ago Canada signed the United Nations Convention for Protection of Refugees, binding Canada to protect any person who comes to Canada claiming to be a refugee, and after we have examined him and found that he is a refugee, we must not cause him to be returned to the country he has fled, directly or indirectly. How then can the Minister justify the decision of the cabinet committee on social development that met on January 21 to amend the Immigration Act so that when a refugee comes to Canada he will be sent away without a chance to state his refugee claim?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is referring to Cabinet documents and decisions. I do not think I have to respond because these are hypothetical questions.

● (1450)

[*English*]

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, the signed report of that cabinet committee meeting, which I have in my hand, is not hypothetical. It is a recommendation by the Minister to that cabinet meeting.

ALLEGED CABINET COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, since that cabinet committee recommended removing those people in order to deny them access to the refugee claims system, and those are