

Adjournment Debate

federal government, through the Agricultural Stabilization Board, come in and soon so that potato growers can take difficult decisions for the next crop year so that these decisions become easier, so that those farmers can decide in a sound and sensible way and not lose their shirts. The government, through the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), made a commitment. They must act now, before it is too late for a large number of family farms. Mr. Speaker, time is of the essence.

Mr. Raymond Dupont (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member from Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) for his concern for potato growers in his area.

Mr. Speaker, the problems faced this year by the eastern Canada potato industry are shared by the industry throughout North America. Because of a small increase in the acreage planted and favourable weather conditions, the 1977 crop has been bigger than normal. The shortage in Europe resulted in very good exports last year but that situation did not reoccur this year, hence the producers found themselves in a predicament. A few export outlets in the United States were developed but none of these proved to be of valuable interest for New Brunswick producers. Returns to producers remained between \$1.60 and \$2 a hundredweight. That level at this point of the marketing season was not enough to cover the

producers' production costs. The matter was referred to the Agricultural Stabilization Board and preliminary meetings were held with producers' representatives and provincial government authorities with a view to providing assistance programs.

A few options were considered to offer producers financial assistance in view of the difficult circumstances. Markets in eastern Canada are closely related because of the competitive factors. The volume of potatoes in storage is constantly decreasing. However, the industry will have to make extensive marketing efforts to sell the rest of the crop. The usual method when a crop is being stabilized is to analyze returns to producers after the crop has been marketed. If the provisions of the Agricultural Stabilization Act call for a payment to producers at that time, then the crop is designated under the act and steps are taken for stabilization. The minister has been closely involved with the concerns of the potato industry and indicated in the House that the need for a stabilization program will be considered at the end of the season.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.36 p.m.