

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Pepin: The hon. member for Crowfoot may want to send me back to the university to teach. Maybe he should go, too. The communiqué refers to "serious pressure" it refers to "the need to consult bilaterally with governments of other countries", "in order to bring about stability in world markets". This morning the Secretary of State for External Affairs expressed the hope that a meeting of exporters at ministerial level would be held very soon—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister is now making a speech.

Mr. Stanfield: I do not think I need any lectures from the minister, although I appreciate—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: I will just ask him a direct question, one which, having spent many years in a university, I am sure he is fully qualified to understand, if he brings his mind to bear on it. Will he answer the question I asked and tell me whether Canada took the position at Washington that the present prices should be maintained? Will he tell us whether Canada solicited and received agreement of the ministers at Washington that this would be their position? If the minister is not prepared to answer this question I can only assume he wishes to evade it.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Pepin: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. The hon. gentleman gave us a lecture lasting 15 minutes this morning on communiqué drafting; I am giving him one now on communiqué reading.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We do not appear to be making much progress.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): I wonder whether the minister will get down from his throne, cease this studied insolence to parliament, and answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: I suggest the right hon. gentleman is not helping the situation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am asking the minister to straighten up the record and make a statement of fact. Did the Canadian government make strong representations to the United States ministers against the United States policy of underselling wheat below the

price set by the international agreement? What was said by the Canadian representatives in this connection? What undertaking did the United States give that the course of action it is following which is detrimental to Canadian wheat producers is going to be stopped?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, many exporters are selling below the set price at this time.

Some hon. Members: Answer the question.

Mr. Pepin: That is done by all exporters.

Some hon. Members: Answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the minister might be allowed to reply to the question.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, hon. members no doubt are aware that on March 14 I said in this house that we would be becoming fully competitive.

Mr. Diefenbaker: But the government has done nothing since that time.

Mr. Pepin: We have become competitive at the highest possible level. We have become competitive with some exporting countries, although France undersells everybody. Ours is a responsible attitude to take and at Washington we were strong advocates of price stability and pointed out that the downward movement of grain at this time is not in Canada's best interest, and is not in the interest of the world. We strongly supported the idea that there should be more co-ordination and co-operation between exporters if we are to prevent a disastrous downward price movement.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I have finally smoked out an answer, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister now say what attitude the United States representatives took, or was their attitude such that the minister prefers to keep it confidential?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I think it should be kept confidential. The people down there are very intelligent, they speak well and are quite capable of speaking for themselves. The right hon. gentleman asked me what the position of the Canadian government was in these matters. Our position was that everything should be done to prevent prices from going down. We are trying to build co-operation between exporters. Some of them have not been as co-operative as others in recent weeks and we are trying hard now to rally the troops.

[Mr. Pepin.]