

their potatoes at about 50 per cent of the cost of production, I wonder whether the minister is preparing with his officials a program under the stabilization plan in order to be of assistance and to prevent a large segment of the industry from going bankrupt.

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, I believe I answered a question in the House last week that we were looking at the problems potato producers are now facing in the Maritime provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, and we are meeting the ministers of agriculture from Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick next Wednesday, I believe.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Some weeks ago in response to a similar question by my colleague from Malpeque the minister indicated that his department had made a very serious study of the marketing problems, which are one of the fundamental difficulties in the present situation. I wonder if the minister is prepared to make that study available so that there can be more information in regard to the possible alternatives to help find some long term solution to this problem.

**Mr. Whelan:** Mr. Speaker, not before I meet with the ministers of agriculture from the two provinces most concerned.

**Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture a supplementary question. Will he look favourably on some emergency solution which might be presented by the governments of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick so that producers will have the financial capability of planting crops this year rather than being forced out of business completely?

**Mr. Whelan:** Mr. Speaker, that is one of our intentions when we meet with the provincial ministers next week.

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#### PUBLIC SERVICE

##### APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE— REASON FOR FAILURE TO APPOINT PERSON WITH AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCE

**Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister concerning the recent appointment of the new deputy minister of agriculture. While I note that the new deputy has impressive credentials in the fields of finance and internal government administration, his background suggests a complete absence of any experience in agriculture. I ask the Acting Prime Minister why the Prime Minister appointed a man without apparent agricultural experience as our new deputy minister and whether applications were considered from candidates with this necessary background in agriculture?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Denis Hudon, who has been appointed as deputy minister of agriculture, is one of the more senior

#### Oral Questions

and more experienced civil servants and a man who has worked in many capacities. I do not think it is absolutely necessary that the deputy minister be a specialist in any particular department. Otherwise, of course, it is very difficult to have flexibility within the public service necessary to give a career to intelligent people. I believe Mr. Denis Hudon will do extremely well as deputy minister of agriculture.

##### APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE— CONSULTATION WITH MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE— POSSIBLE APPOINTMENT OF WESTERNER

**Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat):** Will the Acting Prime Minister indicate whether the Minister of Agriculture was consulted in regard to this appointment and whether he participated in the final decision? Will he also advise whether any serious consideration was given to the appointment of a deputy minister of agriculture from western Canada?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Is the hon. member for Northwest Territories seeking the floor on a question of privilege? If so, perhaps the Acting Prime Minister could be permitted to answer and then I will see the hon. member.

**Mr. Wagner:** Come on, Mitch.

**An hon. Member:** Where is the answer?

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, announcements and appointments of deputy ministers are the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Sharp:** Hon. members opposite perhaps do not understand, but in the system of appointments of deputy ministers this is a prerogative which has always been very highly valued by Prime Ministers—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Sharp:**—including the right hon. member for Prince Albert when he was prime minister. I happen to have been a civil servant during those days, and I know how much he protected that particular prerogative and put it into practice.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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#### PRIVILEGE

##### MR. FIRTH—REFERENCE TO STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE IN MACLEAN'S MAGAZINE

**Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories):** Mr. Speaker, I realize that the Chair should be given notice of questions of privilege, but because of the grave importance of this matter I would like to raise it now. It is a matter which has just been brought to my attention. I would like to read