

### Supply

Mr. Chairman, there is an element of logic in what the minister said regarding the answers on the inspection structure, but I wish to ask him one more question. In view of the costs he has imposed by these regulations, without any *quid pro quo* agreement with the European Economic Community, would he explain why he has exacerbated the problem by suggesting for the first time to Canadian potato farmers that he will charge them for seed inspection?

● (2120)

If ever there was a time in the history of the Canadian potato seed business when producers needed to be encouraged by free inspection, it is now. It is not a matter of imposing now an additional charge over and above the costs of machinery, handling, storing, etc. which are imposed by this regulation without a *quid pro quo* agreement before starting. There is a great deal of evidence to indicate a substantial market for Canadian seed potatoes outside the European Economic Community. I agree that we need to be inside the EEC, but it is a matter of negotiating on a *quid pro quo* basis from the beginning. Why have farmers been told that they will be charged for seed potato inspection after the other requirements have been imposed on them without any reward?

**Mr. Whelan:** Mr. Chairman, I am sure the hon. member is aware that we had discussions with the provincial ministers of agriculture concerned. The provincial minister of agriculture for New Brunswick approved of this program. It is a cost-sharing program. It is not totally the responsibility of the producer; it is the responsibility of the producer, the province and the federal government. It is in the true spirit of confederation, if I may put it that way. It is what we call a unified approach. We are sure that we will come out with the best program ever for seed potatoes. When Canagrex is formed and we are selling seed potatoes, we will be able to guarantee disease-free potatoes. There will be no suspicion that they have ring rot or any other disease. We will be able to say that our potatoes are better than the ones from Holland and Denmark. We cannot say that at the present time.

**Mr. McCain:** Yes, we can.

**Mr. Whelan:** Unless we adhere to these strict rules and regulations, we will not be able to say it. So, it was a necessary step to take. I have not heard the kind of dissension about this program which the hon. member is trying to put across tonight. That has not been indicated in the correspondence I have received. I have visited potato growers in other parts of Canada who are subject to the same control. The potato growers of Alberta had some concern about it, but when I went to them and explained it, I came away from the meeting with the feeling they understood that it would be good for them and good for us also.

**Mr. McCain:** Would the minister ask an economist in his department to estimate the additional cost of the production of potatoes for seed, for table stock and for processing so that it will be down in black and white? Would he ask one of his

experts if he has ever tried to grow netted gem potatoes from whole potatoes never touched by a knife? If so, how should they be planted to get a yield fit for processing, whether it be in Manitoba, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island or Alberta? Obviously the minister has not asked those questions. It is necessary for these potatoes to be planted whole, if I understand the regulations, unless the department has backed off. It is just not a practical way to grow certain varieties.

Will the minister undertake to get the information I have requested? I would like to know the additional machinery, seed and storage costs. Also, will the minister restrict the Canadian market to nothing but Canadian potatoes? If so, where does he expect to find potatoes for consumers during the middle months of the season? We do not and cannot produce them, and we cannot trade with any country which is subject to the problems the minister is trying to preclude. He knows the objectives as well as I. We are both in accord with the objectives, but the means used to attain the objectives are extremely expensive. I just want to know if the minister realizes what costs he has imposed.

I have one further question. Would the minister explain why his department representatives recommend that onion growers with low incomes should receive \$12,000 per farmer, while potato growers receive \$4,000 for the same reason?

**Mr. Whelan:** Mr. Chairman, I do not know what statistic the hon. member is using.

**Mr. McCain:** It was a release from the Department of Agriculture.

**Mr. Whelan:** When we look at the amount of money we have put into potatoes and compare it to the amount of money we have put into onions over a period of years, both of them could probably use a better marketing system. From 1974 to 1978 we spent \$46,800,000 in potato stabilization. If Mr. Chairman will excuse me, we might as well have poured the money down a rathole because it did not make the potato industry—

**Mr. McCain:** They will be glad to hear that all over Canada.

**Mr. Whelan:**—that much better; it did not stabilize it that much. It helped some growers to stay in business, but their marketing system is still one of the most horrible. Perhaps there is one which is a little bit worse, but I will not mention it at the present time.

**Mr. McCain:** Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. The minister's answer is in no way related to any of the questions I asked.

**The Chairman:** With all due respect, the hon. member has a few minutes left in which to make his point. The Minister of Agriculture has the floor.

**Mr. Whelan:** The hon. member made comments about the officials. The deputy minister went to North Africa to talk to the people there about what kinds of potatoes they wanted,