

I had the opportunity yesterday to meet with the Canadian Wheat Board, which was quite encouraged by the international economics of grain at this time, and we are hoping to reach that traditional level of exports.

Mr. Althouse: Madam Speaker, the price decline as a result of the embargo has cost western Canadian farmers an estimated \$225 million. In view of the sad state of the farm economy—and we need only see the lay-offs and the decline of farm machinery companies to see the effect of this—can the minister say when farmers can expect to receive the compensation they were promised because of reduced grain prices due to the embargo?

Mr. Pepin: Madam Speaker, the government acknowledges the principle of compensation. There is a committee led by the Minister of Agriculture working on that, and we expect it will report soon.

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DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

INQUIRY AS TO AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION TO FARMERS

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Madam Speaker, my final supplementary is to the Minister of Agriculture. We have seen a number of laudable attempts by this government to put money into the pockets of cash-short farmers, but Canadian hog farmers have been waiting over six months for stabilization payments. People in the drought area have seen their payments cut in half. Can the minister inform this House as to the amount of compensation farmers can be expected to receive, and will he assure the House that the government will not change its mind once the compensation formula has been announced?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, we said that we would spend the equivalent of \$67 million for drought aid. We have not said we would not spend that amount of money. We met in Regina last week with the advisory group and also with the people who are doing the investigation in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. They outlined some of the problems they have. They also told us of the many good comments they have received from the producers. With the other provisions under the legislation we are bound by with regard to crop insurance, etc., no other country in the world is offering the kind of assistance we are offering.

Under hog stabilization I believe we have 26,000 applications at the present time. We are hoping that those can be processed, if not by the end of November, by early December or before the end of the year. We are hiring extra staff to speed up the processing of stabilization payments. Again, we have not received any direct complaints from any of these people. They have said only that they are both very good programs and that they are very satisfied with them.

Oral Questions

THE CONSTITUTION

INQUIRY WHETHER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS JEOPARDIZED BY RESOLUTION

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice, who in this case in particular fortunately is also the minister responsible for social programs. The minister may recall that in June of 1978 there was a very famous case in the United States, the Bakke case, which dealt with affirmative action programs in relation to the bill of rights in the United States. In that particular case, which the minister will recall, the Supreme Court of the United States threw out the affirmative action program at the University of California on the basis that it was discriminatory according to the bill of rights.

I would like to ask the minister whether he has yet sought a legal opinion as to whether social programs in this country—and more particularly, affirmative action programs—are in jeopardy as a consequence of the bill of rights proposed in his resolution.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, I am not aware of the particular case to which the hon. member refers. I will look into that, but I think that we have made provisions in the bill of rights which will be enshrined in the constitution to make sure there is no such problem.

In fact, if this House would make up its mind and send the whole resolution to the committee, I would be able to deal on a one-to-one basis with these questions. The matter is before the House, but it is in the committee where we can reply to these questions.

Mr. Crombie: Madam Speaker, like all members of this House, I am aware that section 15(2) of the proposed resolution deals with the question of affirmative action programs as related to the disadvantaged. If the minister will check, he will find that one of the difficulties in the Bakke case and two subsequent cases was that the definition of the word “disadvantaged” caused great difficulty. Right now in Washington—I checked this morning—their own affirmative action programs and many of their social programs are in jeopardy as a consequence of that decision. Would he please undertake to advise the House of the legal opinion which he would seek, and make sure that the House, and indeed all people in this country who are concerned with the matter, are informed?

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Madam Speaker, we did answer this question a few seconds ago. I said that it is before the committee that we will discuss these issues—

[English]

Mr. Clark: You prefer Westminster.