

FLOODS

POSSIBLE DECLARATION OF TISDALE-ARMLEY REGION, SASKATCHEWAN, AS DISASTER AREA—PROVISION OF COMPENSATION FOR LOSSES

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. It is in connection with previous questions I have asked regarding the large region in the Tisdale-Armley area of Saskatchewan that has been inundated as a consequence of floods. Has the government of Saskatchewan declared the region in question to be a disaster area, and has it made any request yet to the government of Canada to make a contribution to meet the very heavy losses that are being suffered and will be suffered in harvesting in these areas?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I do not think a request has been made to the federal government to participate in the assistance program although there was one carried out last winter of up to \$2,000 per farmer or \$20 per acre. In addition, I understand that the claims for crop insurance are now being processed and we have reason to believe that the indemnity in most cases will be paid in full.

Mr. Diefenbaker: In addition to crop insurance payments that will be made with respect to crops that were not harvested last fall or were not threshed, what about the tremendous losses these people have suffered in a 50,000-acre area for which there is no compensation under crop insurance? What is going to be done about them? Is the government of Canada going to give any assistance to these people, or can it do so before being requested by the government of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be a departure from the normal policy of waiting for the province to make a request if we were to attempt to set up a direct assistance program circumventing the provincial government. As I said the other day, there is a precedent in regard to losses other than crop losses. If the Saskatchewan government feels it is beyond its capacity to cope with the matter it can make an application to the federal government.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, if the Saskatchewan government does what one expects it will, namely, make a request for assistance, and considering the investigation that has already been made by officials of the federal Department of Agriculture, will the government of Canada give consideration to making payments to these farmers who will not be covered by crop insurance and the like?

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, the federal government always gives consideration to requests that come from the provinces in this respect, but I can give no undertaking beyond that because we have not seen the nature of the damage or the kind of the program the province would wish to use.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps we have reached the moment when the Chair should try to give effect to the undertaking it made yesterday to recognize some of the

Inquiries of the Ministry

backbenchers, some of the frontbenchers in the back rows. I will begin with the hon. member for Lisgar.

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INCOME TAX

EVALUATION BY INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE OF APPLICATION OF NEW ACT TO AGRICULTURE— OPPORTUNITY FOR SUBMISSIONS

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance is not in the House I will direct my question to the Minister of State. In view of the fact the government has announced that a specific group will be set up to evaluate agricultural taxation policy as it pertains to the new tax changes, will this body be receiving submissions from interested groups across Canada, and when and how will the taxation changes that come about be made public?

Hon. P. M. Mahoney (Minister of State): Mr. Speaker, the particular group to which the hon. member is alluding is an interdepartmental committee consisting of officials from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Finance and Department of National Revenue. Persons wishing to communicate views or opinions to them may do so through myself, the Minister of Finance, or any of the other ministers concerned. As to the method by which the tax changes, if any, recommended by that committee come into effect, that of course is a matter for parliament to deal with at the time.

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AGRICULTURE

FERTILIZER—INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED EXCESSIVE PRICES IN MANITOBA AND SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture. It arises out of a question directed to him a few days ago when he was asked about the prices of fertilizer in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in relation to the prices in states south of the border and the possibility of a combine or cartel operating in this field. The minister replied that if there was something more than rumour he would look into it. I called his attention to some evidence. Is he giving it consideration, and is he prepared to look into the excessive prices charged for fertilizer in those two provinces?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member attempted to provide some evidence. However, it was not very useful because, so far as I can recall, it was simply some comments that had been made in a paper. If we could have some invoices and other things like that of a substantive nature it would be helpful.

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker, will the minister give an undertaking that if I do provide him with invoices he will conduct an investigation?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member's supplementary is obviously hypothetical.