

Oral Questions

POST OFFICE

POSTAL WORKERS' STRIKE—DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY ALLOWANCE CHEQUES IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

Mr. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to that of the Leader of the Opposition and it is for the Postmaster General. Yesterday he repeated that he had secret plans for getting family allowance cheques out of the regional post offices and into the hands of the people who are awaiting them. Without asking him to compromise the secrecy of his plans for getting them out of the regional post offices, can he inform the House where the people who are expecting family allowance cheques in southwestern Ontario will be able to pick them up and at what time? Can he indicate whether it will be in the first half of next week and where?

Hon. André Ouellet (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether the hon. member is referring to old age pension cheques or family allowance cheques.

Mr. Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): Family allowance cheques.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, family allowance cheques are almost all distributed except a very few, and they are in the process of being delivered presently.

Mr. Beatty (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a further supplementary question of the minister for clarification. In the case of the hundreds of people who are expecting family allowance cheques which were stranded in regional post offices when the strike was called, has he been able to get them out of the post offices and distributed since then?

Mr. Ouellet: Most of them, yes, Mr. Speaker.

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[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

FEED GRAINS—REQUEST FOR INQUIRY INTO HIGH PRICE OF WHEAT IN EASTERN CANADA

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture.

Since the publication *La Terre de chez-nous* reports that first quality wheat sells for \$7.09 per hundredweight in eastern Canada and in Quebec in particular, and the Canadian Wheat Board informs us in its report that western farmers get only \$2.65 a hundredweight for the same quality of wheat, does the minister intend to investigate and check this exploitation of eastern farmers, not profitable in any way to western farmers?

[*English*]

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, these prices are all monitored and all posted. It is very easy for them to check the actual cost of shipping and the actual commissions involved in respect of the people actually handling the sales. These figures when broken down show, I believe, that no one would be getting an

[*Mr. Trudeau.*]

unwarranted mark-up on the grain. In addition, as I am sure the hon. member is aware, Ontario corn is much cheaper and many people are buying this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rondeau: Can the Minister of Agriculture assure the House that the bill to control profiteering which will be introduced shortly will deal with the exploitation of the western farmers who get only \$2.65 a hundredweight of wheat, while eastern farmers must pay \$7.05 for it?

[*English*]

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I think the only thing I can tell the hon. member is that he will have to be patient for a couple of more days to see the bill himself.

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GRAIN

NORTHEASTERN ALBERTA—AID TO FARMERS WHOSE UNHARVESTED CROPS DESTROYED BY FLOODS

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Agriculture. Inasmuch as flood conditions in northeastern Alberta have virtually destroyed a great portion of the unharvested crop remaining in that area, is he now reconsidering his earlier decision with regard to crop aid to the farmers who are affected there since, now that the floods have taken place, these people will not have a harvest to complete, and also bearing in mind that large advances have been taken out on those crops?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if we have received an official request from the province of Alberta, but I do know from telephone conversations between our officials and officials of the Alberta Department of Agriculture that there have been some rough estimates of the loss. I understand that a formal request will be presented to the federal government, and we have responded generally to these requests in the past.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): Generally or generously?

Mr. Mazankowski: Some time ago the province of Alberta did make representations to the federal Department of Agriculture requesting that acreage payments be made. I am simply asking the Minister of Agriculture whether he is now reconsidering his earlier decision in regard to that proposal made by the Minister of Agriculture for the province of Alberta?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, we have done practically—I do not think I can say exactly—what was requested by the province of Alberta at the time I met with the minister for that province. Before the spring runoff, which is taking place at the present time as a result of the melting of snow, there had been very small requests by the farmers of Alberta amounting to a total of \$80,000, according to the last records I saw, because they too were waiting to see how much of their crops they were going to harvest. I admit that things have certainly changed since then.