

*Adjournment Debate*

● (1815)

Another concern is that with the drought and the increased input costs and falling land values there is even that much more uncertainty in western Canada and in the grain belt. I hope the Minister will be able to announce those initial prices tonight. I think it is essential that those prices be at least as high as last year. Clearly in-put costs are continuing to rise. Therefore it is essential that those initial prices be held up.

The other point I raised in my question to the Minister was the question of the payment under the Western Grain Stabilization Act. That Bill was not brought into the House until well into the new session. We dealt with it here in less than a day. It is reported that the total payment for the year will be about \$1 billion this year. If it is a billion dollars it seems to me we should have an interim payment of at least \$700 million so that the farmers who are suffering economically will have those funds available to them for the planting season. I hope the Minister is able to announce in the House, and not shilly-shilly around, not only that he is going to make a \$700 million interim payment but that he will have those cheques in the farmers' hands within a month so they will be available for that important period of time when they are buying seed, and facing the rest of their in-put costs, all of which have risen during this past year.

**Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Hon. Member for Algoma (Mr. Foster). I think he raises some interesting points. I have to disagree with him on a couple of counts. He talks about the Government shilly-shillying around and wanting the Government to come clean in terms of the date on which the initial payments were announced and the date on which the pre-seeded acreage reports were in the paper.

Let me point out to the Hon. Member that in the last two years—the Hon. Member wanted us to have this out by March 1—the 1983-84 crop year, the initial payments were not announced until April 5, and in 1984-85 the initial payments were not announced until April 13. Two years ago pre-seeded acreage reports were put in the mail on April 20, which traditionally is about 10 days ahead of seeding. That is probably well after seeding starts in southern Alberta. The kicker is, and the Hon. Member is complaining about us not doing it on March 1, last year those reports were not in the mail until May 17. I farm. I have had a permit for 30 years. Basically we had an early spring last year. Seeding was all over by then.

The Hon. Member talks about pre-seeded acreage report. I said last week in response to the Hon. Member's question that it was going to press. We hope to have it finished and out well before the dates—I have just read them to him—that his government, the one of which he was a part, had them out a year and two years ago. The report will not be in the form of a pre-seeded acreage report.

**Mr. Foster:** You are two weeks late now.

**Mr. Mayer:** We are two weeks late according to the Hon. Member. Actually, if we did it now we would be about six weeks ahead of what the Liberal government did a year ago.

**Mr. Foster:** I have the press release. It was April 15 last year.

**Mr. Mayer:** The Hon. Member indicates he is concerned about what producers are doing. We are certainly looking at making what has come to be known as a pre-seeded acreage report a lot more useful to farmers, because we are putting much more information in it. I hope it is something that farmers will find useful in helping with their planting. It will be out in time to be of some assistance to them in planting their crops.

There is one other thing I would like to point out to the Hon. Member. The Hon. Member asked me in his question, although he did not refer to it today, about announcing guaranteed quotas. I am not so sure he knows what a quota is.

**Mr. Foster:** Initial quota is what I said.

**Mr. Mayer:** Let me tell him that the last year it was ever done was in 1980-81 when quotas were guaranteed. He knows, and I pointed this out to him when answering his question, that there is no doubt western producers in particular are suffering a double whammy. At the very time we had low crops the rest of the world had virtually record or near record crops. Whether we like it or not we are very much dependent upon the export market for what we receive for our own products in this country.

One other point in conclusion, if I may, Mr. Speaker, because the Member refers to the Western Grain Stabilization Act payment. We very much appreciate the co-operation of all Parties in the House in passing the amendments. As I said before, and I will say it again, we will have payments in the hands of the producers in the form of an interim payment prior to spring seeding, namely, prior to May 1. It will be as large as we can possibly make it. I do not think it serves any useful purpose to speculate on the amount or to raise expectations and not be able to meet them. This certainly does not help producers as far as buffeting them around. We will make it as large as we possibly can and have it in their hands prior to the first of May.

● (1820)

NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM—PETROLEUM GAS REVENUE TAX—STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH PROVINCES

**Mr. Alex Kindy (Calgary East):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to elaborate the question I directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Miss Carney) concerning the National Energy Program.

The NEP brought into being in 1980 devastated the oil and gas industry in western Canada, especially in Alberta. That devastating policy was brought in somewhat by design. Up to that period of time Alberta had a thriving economy and things seemed to be going well. Once some of the provisions of the