

Inquiries of the Ministry

Some hon. Members: Hear hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I see four or five members who are very anxious to ask supplementaires on this subject. I doubt whether we should spend the rest of the question period on this matter, although I realize it is important. Perhaps the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings might be recognized for the moment.

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a very important matter. A few moments ago the Acting Prime Minister indicated that what has come to light through this leak is only a very small part of the program. When may the House and the country expect to learn more of the program through ministers, or do we have to wait for leaks through the press and radio? When will we learn this?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Donald MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): The Acting Prime Minister stated that all the facts will be ascertained at the time the estimates are before the House. How is that possible when the Acting Prime Minister cannot find out from his own cabinet ministers who was responsible for the memorandum?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to hon. members that the questions are now becoming slightly argumentative. I realize that the matter is important. Will the hon. member kindly resume his seat. Other hon. members may want to ask questions about this very interesting matter, but in fairness to other members who may want to bring other important and interesting matters to the attention of the government, perhaps we might go on to the next subject and in due course return to those hon. members who want to pursue this matter.

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GRAIN

PROGRESS OF NEGOTIATIONS ON NEW AGREEMENT TO REPLACE INTERNATIONAL GRAINS ARRANGEMENT—NATURE OF CANADIAN REPRESENTATIONS

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. Is the minister in a position to advise the farmers of Canada generally and western farmers in particular whether, as a result of the ten days of meetings so far in Geneva, there is any indication that a new agreement will be entered into between the nations to take the place of the International Grains Arrangement?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, beyond confirming the continuation of the negotiations and Canada's participation in all of the committees at these meetings I do not think it would be helpful or appropriate to comment upon the progress of the negotiations themselves.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Then may I put this question, Mr. Speaker, since this is also something which, as the Acting Prime Minister himself said, should not be hidden. Do the Canadian representatives at the meeting favour controlling production to match demand, an end to crop subsidy payments, maintenance by producers of fixed floor prices, and importers buying at uniform rates? Are these some of the representations that Canada is making?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I think I should simply repeat my previous answer, except that I should add that some of the matters included in the question of the right hon. gentleman are far from anything that anybody would represent. Our position in general is well known. We favour an international agreement, one that will be of interest to this country. It is also well known that we believe in a free trading world in which those countries that are supporting an inefficient agricultural industry should make more room for our production. This policy is also well known and I am sure it is being put forward at the meetings.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I thank the minister for his answer. What I was reading from were the representations made by the Canadian delegation and given by the press. Would the minister now tell the House which of the matters I mentioned are so far from the thinking of the Canadian government as to shock his finer sensibilities?

PRODUCTION AND RECEIPTS POLICY—AMOUNT OF FARMERS' CONTRIBUTION—MAXIMUM GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister responsible for the Wheat Board whether, in view of the stand taken by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture that contributions by grain growers to a stabilization plan should not exceed a maximum of one per cent, the minister is prepared to accept this as the maximum burden that he could expect to place on the western grain growers at this time?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, many discussions have been going on, as all hon. members know. In these discussions, not surprisingly, the farm organizations have tended to suggest that if the farmers pay less rather than more the plan would be more attractive to them. What we have to try to do is to determine from our discussions where they put their priorities in terms of types of program, and then as a government we must reach a conclusion as to the total amount of financing that may be possible out of general revenue.

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker, in view of the minister's statement at the meeting he had with the Manitoba Farm Bureau in which he said that he recognized there would have to be a limit to the amount of money which would be available, is he prepared to inform the House what is the maximum contribution, subsidy or aid the government is prepared to make available to the western grain grower?