

Inquiries of the Ministry

expecting to have a report from the agricultural committee which made a tour of western Canada, as soon as it is convenient for them to meet with me.

POTATOES—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON ASSISTANCE TO P.E.I. GROWERS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the statement made earlier by the minister in the house with regard to the meeting he had with representatives of the agricultural industry in Prince Edward Island with respect to the very serious situation there in terms of potato markets, and the plight of the growers for this season, would the minister be prepared this week to make a statement on policy as to the form of assistance his department will give in order to alleviate this very serious situation?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is aware that we initiated the diversion of some of the inventory of potatoes to starch plants. This program is now operating to the full capacity of starch plants in the maritime provinces. Whatever favourable effect this diversion program had on the potato market of New Brunswick is, of course, reflected in the market for all the maritimes. I am prepared to admit that it has not been significant. But to date the plans that have been presented to us by the government of Prince Edward Island would not in our view be practical inasmuch as they have been tried before and have not proved satisfactory.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that time is running out for the growers this season, would the minister reconsider the action taken by the government last season? While he himself expressed some reservations about its effectiveness, I believe it was as effective as possible, in terms of a short term solution, in easing the situation of Prince Edward Island farmers.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, we have considered this a number of times, and on balance I am persuaded by the representations that have been made to me, namely, that the program we undertook last year was not particularly popular or favoured among the producers themselves.

[Translation]

POTATOES—PROGRAM FOR QUEBEC GROWERS

Mr. Gaston Clermont (Gatineau): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Agriculture.

If a second assistance program for potato-growers were established, would Quebec potato-growers be able to take advantage of it?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member will admit that his question is hypothetical.

[English]

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): It certainly is with this government.

[Translation]

GRAIN

WHEAT—SUPPORT PRICE AND TWO-PRICE SYSTEM

Mr. Bernard Dumont (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture.

Could he tell us whether he supports the two-price policy requested by the Saskatchewan farmers and the Saskatchewan "Wheat pool"?

[English]

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the "two-price policy for wheat" is a pretty vague term that is subject to many interpretations. I am sure my hon. friend realizes that there are many specific details that are attached to the term "two-price system". But, generally speaking, we have taken a number of measures in order to alleviate the serious situation, and we are willing as well to consider specific proposals respecting this concept.

Mr. Baldwin: The government's policy is pretty vague, too.

WHEAT—SALES UNDER COMPETITIVE PRICING

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister without Portfolio from Saskatchewan. Could the minister inform the house what significant sales of wheat have taken place to foreign buyers since the Wheat Board decided recently to adopt a policy of competitive pricing?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, it is the custom to answer questions of that sort by saying it is not the