

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 31, 1967

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Second report of special joint committee on immigration—Mr. Klein.

[Translation]

Second report of special joint committee on penitentiaries—Mr. Watson.

[English]

GRAIN

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FINAL PAYMENTS ON WHEAT, OATS AND BARLEY

Hon. Robert Winters (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, the mailing of the wheat payment cheques will be completed tomorrow. The distribution of the cheques for the final payments for oats and barley will commence on February 2 and will be completed within the next two weeks.

In 1965-66 producers delivered 49,626,630 bushels of oats and 88,920,104 bushels of barley. The amounts of the final payments to be distributed are \$12,313,571 for oats, and a record \$29,230,543 for barley. As I informed the house on January 13, the amount of the final payment on wheat was \$270,028,575. Thus the total of the final payment on wheat, oats and barley is \$311,572,689, which is the largest final payment on grains in the history of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Winters: These sums are not a final payment by the government of Canada but represent the net returns of the Canadian Wheat Board in the marketing of western Canadian wheat, oats and barley for the 1965-66 crop year. The average final payment for oats is a record 24.8 cents a bushel, and the average final barley payment of 32.8 cents a bushel has been exceeded only once.

I beg leave, Mr. Speaker, to table the statement being issued today in Winnipeg by the Canadian Wheat Board regarding the final payments on oats and barley.

Mr. Speaker: Has the minister leave to table the document to which he has referred?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

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Mr. E. Nasserden (Rosihern): Mr. Speaker, the farmers in western Canada will, of course, be pleased with this announcement of the final payments on the oats and barley pools. As the minister has indicated, this is a payment of money due to them on the sale of their grain. I was interested in the minister's statement that these, with minor exceptions, are the highest payments on record. Western farmers are presently facing the highest costs in their entire history, and this is one of the facts that must be borne in mind when examining these figures.

If my memory serves me correctly there is no appreciable increase in the volume of barley as compared with previous years, and the improvement in the payment on oats is a reflection of the policy begun eight, nine or almost ten years ago, when the oats pool was in a deficit position. Over the years it has gradually been brought to its present situation.

• (2:40 p.m.)

Of course this also brings to mind the other problems which face those who are engaged in agriculture generally and particularly those in the dairy industry. They have a peculiar problem. All in all I would say that the people in western Canada will be pleased with the final payment, but still it does not reflect the improvement which we should like to see in the position of those who are producing grain in western Canada, when one considers the high cost of production which prevails at the present time.

Mr. Ed. Schreyer (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, the minister's announcement to the house and the country will be welcome news to the grain producers of western Canada particularly those who have middle sized and smaller farming operations, because to these people the production of oats and barley is relatively a more important factor in their operations. I should like to say also that the fact that the final payments on oats and barley are at either record or near record rates on a per bushel basis seems to be a pretty definite indication that perhaps it is time to think in terms of increasing the amount of the initial payment.

One could make the very logical argument, since the farmers must wait a certain number