

Bienvenue agreement and the Cullen-Couture agreement with respect to immigration that, for instance, the Government of Quebec should not have prior notice with respect to the entry of immigrants into that province? I do not follow the leader's reasoning that this is not a matter for the provinces.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, my honourable friend's several questions point up the need to discuss this matter in a more comprehensive way in the appropriate committee or, indeed, here in the chamber during debate on the bill. My friend is mixing up the situation with regard to immigrants and the situation with regard to refugees. My statement with regard to refugees is that in accordance with the law and in accordance with the agreements that we have, as it happens, with Quebec and the other provinces, it is the federal government that has the exclusive right to decide on refugee claimants in Canada, and that is what we are dealing with in Bill C-84.

● (1420)

AGRICULTURE

DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS TO WESTERN GRAIN FARMERS FOR 1987 CROP YEAR

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. The Minister of Agriculture has indicated his approval in principle of a proposal for a \$3 billion deficiency payment for this year's crop. I am wondering if the Leader of the Government in the Senate could give us an indication—

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): I am sorry; a payment of how much?

Senator Fairbairn: A payment of \$3 billion. Can the Leader of the Government in the Senate indicate to us when we might expect a final decision on this matter, rather than a statement of principle from the minister or from himself?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I must confess that I am unaware of the basis on which my honourable friend attributes that statement to the Minister of Agriculture. I have no doubt that she has some basis for the question, but I am not aware of the statement and would have to consult with Mr. Wise on it.

Senator Fairbairn: Honourable senators, indeed the basis for the statement is some comments that were made by the minister when meeting with farm leaders in Winnipeg yesterday. I would be glad to send the report of that meeting to the Leader of the Government in the Senate.

Also, I would ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate, on behalf of those of us from western Canada, if he would support a generous deficiency payment of this nature when that matter comes before cabinet, since this matter is of absolutely vital importance to the farmers of western Canada.

Senator Murray: The honourable senator knows better than to ask me to commit myself to advocate or support a particular

formula for assistance to farmers when the cabinet is studying—as I am sure it will—various options. Again, I have not seen the statement attributed to my colleague, Mr. Wise, in which Senator Fairbairn quotes him as committing the government to a \$3 billion payment. I think I would want to discuss that matter with Mr. Wise before replying further.

Hon. H.A. Olson: Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. In order that the public at large and the farmers in particular may know, I wonder whether the Leader of the Government in the Senate would advise us whether or not a deficiency program is under active consideration now by the government.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, in view of the statements that have been attributed today to my colleague, I think I should take that question as notice.

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, the Leader of the Government in the Senate can again take that question as notice, as he has been doing for the last four or five months, while the patient starves to death. The farmers would like to know whether this government intends to institute a program similar to last year's program. I am not asking about the amount, since it seems to disturb the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether the amount is \$1 billion or \$3 billion. However, he will recall, I am sure, that the provincial premiers had a meeting in Humboldt, Saskatchewan, earlier this year, where, after consideration, they announced that the absolute minimum payment would be \$1.6 billion, simply because the price of grain had deteriorated by at least that much since the 1986 crop year. I am now asking the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether or not the government is actively considering a program of this nature, the details of which, of course, can be announced when they are ready.

I might also tell the minister that the Province of Alberta has, in fact, restored the assistance that they provided in 1986 under the Crop Insurance Program. I will not go into the details of that, but it simply means that they have restored the level of the Crop Insurance Program for 1987, as they did in 1986 and 1985. Will the federal government have a program for the 1987 crop? Is it under active consideration? Surely the minister will realize that it is time the farmers were given some indication of whether or not this government is going to have a program.

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, the farmers will be given a timely indication of what the policy of the government is in this regard.

Senator Olson: Then the obvious question is: What does "timely" mean? The minister is probably not aware—and I would be very happy to help him understand—that we have now arrived at the harvest season of the crop and the price has not changed. In fact, on August 1 it went down a further 18 per cent. It was low enough before, but the government reduced the price by a further 18 per cent on August 1, and as much as 27 per cent on barley on the initial payments, which is the only floor price in existence.

[Senator Grafstein.]