

Inquiries of the Ministry

as a result of which farmers in all parts of Canada are unable to obtain necessary operating capital to finance the 1969-70 crop year.

In amendment thereto the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar, seconded by the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin), proposed as follows:

That the motion be amended by inserting therein, immediately after the words "Canadian agriculture", the following words:

"which in the prairie provinces is due in the main to declining grain prices and reduced delivery quotas."

This motion gave rise to a far-ranging discussion which in my view covered fairly well the grounds raised in the proposed motion of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar. It is suggested to hon. members that the situation brought to the attention of the house by the hon. member who proposed the motion relating to the International Grains Arrangement is not of recent occurrence. It is, rather, in the nature of a continuing problem. The minister's statement of yesterday, commented upon on motions and examined at length during the question period, does not appear to reveal such new circumstances as would justify a debate under the provisions of Standing Order 26.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**AGRICULTURE****WHEAT—INQUIRY AS TO MEASURES TO ASSIST WESTERN FARMERS**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a very direct question for the Minister of Finance. I hope he is able to give me a yes or no answer, preferably yes. Is the government now actively considering any special measures on an emergency basis to meet the critical cash position of western grain farmers?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the government's policy in this regard will be announced in the house in the usual manner.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Scandalous!

Mr. Stanfield: In view of the seriousness of the situation and the present cash shortage on the farms, especially grain farms, and the fact that this has caused farm machinery sales to fall by some 30 to 50 per cent this year, with the accompanying problems, does the government plan any action to meet the emergency that is developing so rapidly?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, the government's policy will, as normal, be announced when it is determined.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I have one further question in view of the unsatisfactory nature of the replies of the Minister of Finance. Has the attention of the minister been drawn to the statement of the Saskatchewan Implement Dealers Association concerning the serious drop in sales and the very critical condition regarding inventories? If so, what is the attitude of the government of Canada in this regard? Has it, for example, any plans to meet the responsible leaders of the governments most immediately concerned? Has it any plans at all?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, the Prime Minister is at the present time in the west meeting the heads of the provincial governments there. It is the intention of the government to do all within its power to assist the people of western Canada.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Nothing has been done.

Mr. Benson: What did you do in the seven years you were in office?

GRAIN**WHEAT—INQUIRY AS TO PAYMENT TO FARMERS OF I.G.A. FLOOR PRICE—RESTORING OF PRICES—GOVERNMENT POLICY**

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I had a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, who is on the roster today but is unfortunately absent. Therefore may I direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister. Inasmuch as the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce indicated yesterday that there will be a further decline in wheat prices and as the present crop year ends in about two weeks, and since the farmers have a right to know what prices they will obtain, does the government intend to pay the farmers through the Canadian Wheat Board on the basis of the floor price under the International Grains Arrangement?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is in Winnipeg today having discussions with the Canadian Wheat Board upon many of the matters that are being discussed here. So far as I know it is not the intention to fix the initial price at the