

Oral Questions

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): I will tell you what I can say, Mr. Speaker. We are in the process of doing the final calculation on the figure for an interim payment under the Western Grain Stabilization Act. We hope to have that in the mail and in producers' hands by May 1. We did that as a result of an amendment we introduced. We did not do what the previous Government did, make a small payment in the middle of an election for political purposes. We are making it prior to spring seeding so it will do some good for the farmers in putting their crop in the ground.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the Minister knows that payment is for the present crop year, not the upcoming crop year. How is it that the Government is able to find \$1 billion for a bank bail-out over a Labour Day weekend but it is not able to find \$1 billion for farmers?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: You guys are using the same writers as the NDP.

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): First, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member should know that we did not bail out the banks. It was the depositors who had money in those banks who were the people who were looked after.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Broadbent: Tell that to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Mayer: Go ahead and laugh. He should also know that yesterday we announced a couple of other things. We are freezing the maximum tariffs charged by elevator companies in terminals—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The NDP would not do it.

● (1430)

Mr. Mayer: You want us not to do it? Is that what the Opposition is saying? I can understand the Liberals as they do not have a farmer over there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): As a farmer I would like to direct my question to Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board. In April, 1984, the present Minister condemned the Liberal Government in a motion which he put before the House which said, "This House condemns the Government for its failure to recognize the importance of the agricultural sector". It went on to say, "... and urge the

Government to resist the erosion of initial prices of western grain".

Mr. Speaker: Order. Just a question, please.

Mr. Hovdebo: How can the Minister make that kind of a statement and subsequently erode the prices of western grain by his announcement yesterday?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): I said yesterday when we made the announcement that it is a very difficult situation. As a farmer from Prince Albert the Hon. Member knows that we face the same kind of problems when we go to our banks in the spring to make financing arrangements for our crop. I said we are going to make a western grain stabilization payment as large as we can and get it in producers' hands with regard to—

Mr. Benjamin: It's their money.

Mr. Mayer: Part of it is their money. A third of it is their money, two-thirds of it is Government money. It is up to the Government to decide when and what amount the interim payment should be. We announced yesterday that we are going to be looking very seriously in terms of what we can do on the domestic price issue. As a country Canada has taken the lead, and always has, in international wheat agreements. Canada chaired the International Wheat Council meeting that was held recently in London to look at the international wheat—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Short supplementary.

REQUEST FOR DEFICIENCY PAYMENT

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Will the Minister announce at least a \$2.50 per bushel deficiency payment to save those thousands of farmers who are going to go bankrupt because of the announcement that he made yesterday?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that makes it very difficult for Canada, as well as Argentina and Australia, to deal with on the international grain market is that the three of us, as countries, export such a very large per cent of our production. That makes it very difficult for Canada to compete with the Americans and the Europeans in what a lot of us think is a ridiculous price war.

What we are trying to do is work with the other exporting nations to make sure that when they are spending money that it is not going to be spent in such a way that simply drives prices down and hurts all of our producers collectively. Canada has been taking the lead in trying to bring about those discussions.

CANADIAN AND UNITED STATES PAYMENTS TO FARMERS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): I would like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. Why is it that under the current arrangement the Canadian farmer is going to be paid \$3 a bushel while the American farmer at the