

Oral Questions

the House whether he concurs with the Minister of Finance's acceptance of an 18 per cent to 20 per cent or higher level of youth unemployment?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the comment of my colleague, the Minister of Finance, when he said that such levels of unemployment were not acceptable.

Mr. St. Germain: Mr. Speaker, I find it deplorable that the Minister concurs with the Minister of Finance when we have 45 per cent unemployment in ridings in western Canada where affluence used to exist.

CRITERIA APPLICABLE TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT FUNDS

Mr. Gerry St. Germain (Mission-Port Moody): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary concerns the \$150 million allocated to youth in the last Budget. Would the Minister please tell this House how that money will be distributed and what criteria are to be used in applying for these funds? We would like to know now.

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): The Hon. Member cannot know right now, Mr. Speaker, because not all of the decisions relating to that \$150 million have been taken. However, he will know all the details very soon.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

INITIAL PRICE FOR WHEAT

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Transport, who answers for the Wheat Board, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. Prairie grain farmers face a substantial drop in wheat prices for two main reasons, the soft world grain price and, of course, a highly competitive market. Will it be government policy to maintain the initial price at or very near to the present level for the 1984-85 crop year, thereby possibly having the Government assume some of the risk by putting some money into the pool at the end of the year? If not, would the Government be prepared to implement offsetting deficiency payments to compensate for what appears to be a disastrous pricing situation facing western farmers this particular year?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, first of all the Hon. Member has a very pessimistic attitude about the price for grain. I know, and he knows, that at this time of the year no crop is created or lost. All of these things have to be taken into consideration. Some of my advisers are telling me that prices are going to increase because of world conditions, et cetera. Of the things he has suggested, the last one in particular is not being considered, but the other two are.

Mr. Murta: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board said there could be as much as a \$17 a tonne Canadian price drop

this coming year. The Minister responsible for the Wheat Board echoes those concerns. Perhaps the two Ministers can get their act together.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, the Government obviously cannot allow western grain agriculture to collapse. The fact that farmers have to bear substantially higher transportation costs this year, along with increases in other input costs, on top of the fact that they have had two poor crop years on the Prairies, will force a lot of farmers into bankruptcy. Will the Government live up to its obligation and make sure that the initial prices for the coming year are maintained at not less than the present prices?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the record will show that initial prices have always been set in a realistic fashion which is satisfactory to the farmers, maybe not 100 per cent satisfactory, but at least 90 per cent.

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AGRICULTURE

WESTERN GRAIN STABILIZATION LEGISLATION—REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Agriculture. I think he knows that prairie farm income is down and bankruptcies are up. Can he tell the House whether he is willing to make the necessary changes to the western grain stabilization legislation which would trigger a payout to prairie grain farmers for the crop year 1983? A lot of grain farmers are asking for this.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, first of all I am sure the Hon. Member knows that every grain farmer in western Canada does not belong to the Western Grain Stabilization Program. About 76 per cent or 77 per cent belong, so about 23 per cent do not. When he says "farmers", he should say those farmers who belong to the plan.

The Hon. Member knows that we have a report, and I am sure he knows that we are already working on that plan, and we hope to have his co-operation and that of the rest of the House when we present the plan to the House.

TIMING OF INTRODUCTION OF AMENDING LEGISLATION

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, that is the same answer we have been getting now for weeks from the Minister of Agriculture, and also from the Senator in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. I want to know when we are going to see the changes in that plan. They were promised in the Throne Speech. I suggest he do it now, otherwise all those green hats for the leadership campaign will go to waste.