

Oral Questions

Minister of State we will consult, and advise the House, if and when it is appropriate.

REQUEST FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF DEFICIENCY PAYMENT

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): But for the grace of Brian, there goes God!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: I will not allow a response. Just a question, please.

Mr. Nystrom: The price of wheat in Canada will be about \$3 a bushel and in the United States around \$6 Canadian. Is the Prime Minister ready to announce a deficiency payment on our international sales so Canadian farmers will have a decent price for the work they are doing?

• (1125)

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, we have attempted to approach this issue as a very serious matter, which it is. The Hon. Member does not do any good to the people he represents in his riding of Yorkton—Melville by taking cheap shots at anybody.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mayer: We have tried very hard to co-operate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Just the answer, please.

Mr. Mayer: We have pointed out, time and time again, this Government's commitment toward agriculture in the west and across the country, the many initiatives that have been taken by the Minister of Agriculture, and the total amount of money that has been transferred from the federal Government to the grain economy. The Prime Minister outlined it in detail this morning at his press conference. I think that tells you the strong commitment we have to western agriculture as far as this Government is concerned.

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PUBLIC WORKS

DEPARTMENT'S CONTRACT AWARDING PROCESS

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. When the tainted tuna scandal arose the Prime Minister said: "When it was brought to my attention, bang! Immediately the Minister's resignation was secured". Has anything been brought to his attention on which he should take action to assure the integrity of the contract awarding process in the Department of Public Works? Bang!

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is a former Solicitor General of

Canada. He knows very well the position that was taken by his Leader, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition, which was that no Solicitor General or no Member of Parliament should take action which could impede a police investigation or impede the ability of an individual to have a fair trial. Surely a responsible individual would respect that point of view, and would desist from this sort of questioning in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kaplan: I also know that it is unparliamentary to hide behind an irrelevant consideration like that.

INTEGRITY OF PROCESS

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am not asking about the police investigation. The Government is responsible for all of its Departments and for the contract awarding process—

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

Mr. Kaplan: Have any steps been taken to ensure the integrity of the contract awarding process of the Department of Public Works?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman, who is an officer of the courts as a lawyer, and a former Solicitor General, may believe that the principle that individuals are entitled to a fair trial and that we should not interfere with police investigations may be irrelevant. We on this side do not.

I would expect that all Members of the House of Commons would show some sense of responsibility and not interfere with investigations which may be under way.

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AGRICULTURE

GRAIN PRICES—REQUEST FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF DEFICIENCY PAYMENTS

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. The low initial grain prices are forcing down the projected income of the farmers. The banks are reacting by cutting off the line of credit of many farmers and therefore making it difficult, even impossible, for them to get into seeding operations this fall. Will the Minister back the need for action indicated by the Prime Minister this morning, by attempting to upgrade the income of farmers by some kind of deficiency payment, which will allow their projected income to rise?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, Members on all sides of the House passed, in one day, amendments to the Western Grain Stabilization Act a year ago in February, which allow for