

Oral Questions

some diligence in trying to keep the questions to the point and keeping the responses to the point as well. The Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville.

DEFICIENCY PAYMENT INQUIRY

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Agriculture. I just came back from talking to hundreds of western grain farmers—

Mr. Crosbie: Question.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The first time this year.

Mr. Nystrom: What the grain farmers want to know is how much of the federal Government's farm aid program will be for western grain farmers in terms of a deficiency payment? And will the Minister stop spreading the story that there is \$1 billion for the West and tell us how much we are going to get?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member makes some reference to spreading rumours and stories and tries to confuse the issue. It does not come from this side. It comes from that side. There is certainly no question about that.

Mr. Orlikow: Answer the question.

Mr. Murphy: Give us the answer.

Mr. Wise: The matter of loan guarantee, in fact, was brought to my attention by the Minister of Agriculture and Food from Ontario. However, we have said from day one this is a \$1 billion federal program. Naturally, it would be national in scope.

Mr. Orlikow: How much for the West?

Mr. Wise: I am sure the Hon. Member would not want to stand in his place, given two similar situations—one produces grain in Saskatchewan, and one produces grain in Ontario or Quebec—and deny us the time and opportunity to consult with our provincial counterparts—

Mr. Orlikow: How much for the West?

Mr. Wise: —the time and the opportunity to consult with farm leaders so that we can together, not unilaterally, develop a program that is fair and equitable across the country.

ASSISTANCE FOR WESTERN GRAIN FARMERS

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): The Minister is worse than Mr. Whelan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Nystrom: I want to know how much of that federal farm aid program is going to be there for western grain farmers? How much will western grain farmers be getting? Answer the question and answer it now.

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, some reference was made to my predecessor and, of course, he had some difficulties because the former Government only paid lip service to the agricultural industry. We put our money where our mouth is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Riis: How much money, John?

Mr. Wise: The Hon. Member hollers across the aisle. I have no problem with hearing. I want to—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would ask the Hon. Member to complete his questions and I would ask the Hon. Minister to respond to them as best he can.

Mr. Riis: He is.

Mr. Nystrom: I will try again, Mr. Speaker.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL MEETING

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): I wonder if the Minister of Agriculture can tell us why he did not organize a meeting with his provincial counterparts sooner in order to let western Canada know how much there would be in a deficiency payment. Why did he wait until a 5.30 a.m. telephone call from a desperate Grant Devine before he started to do something?

An Hon. Member: Right on.

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): I have consulted with my provincial counterparts across the country. In fact I did so with my colleague from Ontario just a couple of days ago.

Mr. Blaikie: Why so early in the morning?

Mr. Wise: I could not tell the last time I had a telephone conversation with the Premier, and the Minister of Agriculture, incidentally, from the Province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Orlikow: How much money for the West?

Mr. Wise: What we are attempting to do is to find the answer to the question the Hon. Member poses and that is exactly what we intend to do. That is exactly why we are meeting with the Deputy Ministers today. That is exactly why we are meeting next week with farm leaders.