

expressed concerns which, I can assure him, are shared by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan).

In reply to the hon. member's question, the minister has advised that he was closely following the increase in the price of chemical fertilizers. In fact, he is now writing to manufacturers of chemical fertilizers, proposing a meeting in order to be able to examine the subject with them.

I am informed that a shortage of potassium is not the main reason for the increase in those prices. I know that the Supreme Court will soon be hearing a suit related to the quota system used by Saskatchewan for the regulation of the potassium supply, but I do not believe I can make any further remarks in this regard except to say that the officials of the Department of Agriculture are following the matter closely and consider it as an aspect of their inquiry.

Nitrogen and phosphates are the chemical fertilizers most often used by the Prairie farmers. Pre-season purchases of 11-48-0 fertilizer have increased by 25 per cent over last year and there is apparently no surplus of phosphates as was the case in previous years. The price of nitrogen, a by-product of natural gas, has increased for the same reason.

I would like to mention to the hon. member that in order to minimize price increases, farmers should bargain in many places in order to get the best price, buy in bulk where possible and place their order as soon as convenient so as to avoid the spring rush which will be particularly intense this year.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I think the matter is serious and we will make every possible effort to enlighten the situation.

[English]

AGRICULTURE—FEED GRAIN—SUGGESTED ASSISTANCE RESPECTING PROTEIN SUPPLEMENT

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, several days ago I asked the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) a question in connection with the feed freight equalization program to provide feed grain to the Atlantic growers at a cost which is in a sensible relationship to the cost of the same feed grain to the western grower. The able Minister of Agriculture is not seated in his place tonight, from which I gather he does not intend to reply to this adjournment debate. But in answer to my question I received the usual answer, that protein additions or additives or concentrates would not necessarily be included in the feed grain assistance program for the ensuing year but that it would be considered.

Mr. Speaker, as I was thinking today of what I might say in this seven-minute debate, one hon. member said to me "Patrick, why do you even have to think about feed grain assistance to Atlantic Canada? Surely the facts are so graphic on your retina of memory that you don't have to worry about facts and figures to try to tell the House tonight how important this program is?" Mr. Speaker, you, who come from one of the greater feed grain areas in Canada, that is, an area which needs feed grain, know better than I how fundamental is the program of feed

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freight equalization grants, payments, call it what you will, to Atlantic Canada.

When I look at Atlantic Canada and/or the Annapolis Valley I try to picture what would happen if feed freight assistance went out of the window. Mr. Speaker, you might as well then put that part of Atlantic Canada out of the window: it is that fundamental. You can resurrect the old stories of those under steam and sail wondering why we did not coalesce more with the northeastern part of the United States in order to get a viable economy.

Atlantic feed freight assistance has had a better multiplier effect on the economy of Atlantic Canada than any program I can think of. This program has been in existence for 25 to 30 years. Surely the government could learn from this experience. The whole subject is of such importance that not only the Nova Scotia Board of Agriculture but the Maritime Farm Council have passed several resolutions connected with it.

• (2210)

We also wanted included in the feed freight assistance program the question of protein additives or concentrates; we wanted these incorporated into the feed grain assistance act. I do not want to bore the House by reading the resolutions passed by the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture or by federations of agriculture in Atlantic Canada in regard to suggested amounts of feed freight assistance, but as a member from Atlantic Canada I am beginning to wonder just where Atlantic Canada fits into the whole program.

The Minister of Agriculture is from Essex and he may be able to grow tomatoes without feed grain additives or protein additives. But if he came from Atlantic Canada he would be standing in my place tonight trying to get the House to take a definitive position on feed grain assistance not only to Atlantic Canada but to la belle provence and the beautiful province of British Columbia as well. The provinces of British Columbia, Quebec and the four Atlantic provinces, especially number one, Nova Scotia, depend on feed grain assistance. The Crownest pass rates have been inscribed into the statute of Canada, but so far we have not been told just where feed freight assistance, feed freight programs, feed freight policy or feed freight statutes fit into the priorities of this government.

As the House knows, I come from the Annapolis Valley. If the poultry producers and hog producers of the Annapolis Valley were deprived of feed grain assistance they would be in dire trouble. The Annapolis Valley is the king producer in Nova Scotia. I realize there are producers in New Brunswick and a more moderate amount in P.E.I., but Kings county, which is the base of the Annapolis Valley, is being castrated by the electoral commission in its attempt to divide the county. Divided or not, they can never deny the necessity for feed grain assistance and the equalization of feed grain rates in Atlantic Canada so that in truth there is a program that eliminates regional economic disparity, a program that would enable the various economic regions of Atlantic Canada to realize their full potential.

In closing, may I say I hope the Minister of Agriculture, who is presently sitting in the front row, will hobble back