

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the discussions was to enable the United Kingdom to understand clearly our concern about access to the U.K. market, not only for wheat but also for coarse grains, and I think we made this very clear to them. The position of our wheat, of course, is rather special, in view of the general need for this kind of wheat by several countries in Europe, including countries which are already members of the EEC. This position is related to the quality of our wheat and it is our hope that we can preserve and indeed enlarge this market, but this will take a continuing effort on our part.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question. The minister has mentioned the fact that there is a demand for Canadian hard wheat in Europe and in Great Britain. From his discussions with Mr. Rippon did he gather whether or not, in spite of the fact that Canadian hard wheat is required, we will be required to pay the import levy? Has he any idea how much this levy will be, and what effect this will have on the price received by the western farmers?

Mr. Lang: The whole question of the levy system and the details of any such system are under discussion between the government of the United Kingdom and a number of other governments in the whole context of our respective rights under GATT. No firm announcement to my knowledge has been made yet, but the levy system can be one that involves levies only when prices fall below particular levels and therefore need not concern a specific grain except in special circumstances.

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TRANSPORT

SHORTAGE OF FREIGHT CARS AT PRINCE GEORGE FOR MOVEMENT OF LUMBER

Mr. Robert Borrie (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Transport I wish to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister on an extremely urgent matter. As a result of a serious shortage of box and flat-deck rail cars at Prince George, British Columbia, the lumber industry has been required to cut operations back to one shift. Would the Acting Prime Minister advise if action is being taken to provide cars so that the lumber industry will not be faced with a 40 per cent or more lay-off in manpower within the next week?

Hon. Arthur Laing (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I regret that the Minister of Transport is not on the roster today, but I can assure the hon. member that this problem is known to him. It is under the most urgent consideration at this time, and I would hope that it will be remedied in a matter of days.

Inquiries of the Ministry

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

DISBANDING OF COMMONWEALTH COMMITTEE ON INDIAN OCEAN SECURITY—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs. It refers to the same very important topic about which I inquired on Friday, namely, the status of the Singapore committee to study security in the Indian Ocean. Since the minister at that time said the government believed this was a useful initiative of the conference but that a meeting of the committee now would not be carrying out the purposes of the conference, would the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs consider preparing a statement on this very important matter so that Canada, its people and other members of the Commonwealth may know what Canada regards as its status and prospects?

[Translation]

Mr. André Ouellet (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): I thought, Mr. Speaker, that the Secretary of State for External Affairs had answered that question last Friday. At any rate, I will reconsider the hon. member's question and follow it up this week, if necessary.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

DOCKYARD EMPLOYEES WAGE DISPUTE—INQUIRY AS TO MEETING OF PARTIES

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister since the dockyard strike affects his province, but it could also be directed to the Acting President of the Treasury Board. Is there any indication that the two sides will be meeting within the next two days?

Hon. Arthur Laing (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would certainly hope so.

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FINANCE

INCREASE IN CHARTERED BANK CHARGES ON CURRENT ACCOUNTS

Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. It concerns the increase in charges on current accounts announced by the chartered banks. In view of this 33 per cent increase, which is rather outrageous and certainly is inflationary, is it the intention of the minister to look into the increase in charges announced by the chartered banks?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this is a matter for decision by the banks. I certainly have observed the increases, but I have no right to dictate to them what their charges should be.