

Oral Questions

purchase hopper cars or any type of rolling-stock, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. Hamilton):

That the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board and officials of the Canadian Wheat Board appear before the Standing Committee on Agriculture to explain their action, and that the standing committee be authorized to carry out a study to determine the reason for the deferral and loss of sales which has cost the producer and the economy of Canada countless millions of dollars.

Mr. Speaker: Such a motion can be introduced for debate at this time only with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

REQUEST THAT AUDITOR GENERAL STUDY BOARD'S
ACCOUNTS—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Frank Hamilton (Swift Current-Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, I rise, under the provisions of Standing Order 43, on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity.

As high-handed and sloppy transportation programming by the Canadian Wheat Board is largely responsible for the billion dollar loss sustained by western grain producers so far this year through lost and deferred sales, interest and demurrage, etc., and the Canadian Wheat Board's move to purchase up to \$100 million worth of additional grain cars with producers' money is an abuse of their authority under the act, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil):

● (1112)

That the government immediately refer the Canadian Wheat Board accounts to the Auditor General for study and comment.

Mr. Speaker: Presentation of such a motion for debate at this time can be done only with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

EXPLANATION OF OVERRUNS ON CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMS

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister, whose last [Mr. Neil.]

words in this House yesterday afternoon had to do with Mickey Mouse.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lawrence: While the Prime Minister is in this inward-looking mood, I would like to ask him, in relation to the very gross overruns and runaways as far as capital expenditure projects are concerned, if he has an explanation to give to the Canadian people and to the House today in relation to these expenditures—on capital works programs, for instance.

In addition, what explanation does he have for the "R" class icebreakers costing six times what they were expected to cost and what the contracts called for when they were originally let? What explanation does the Prime Minister have for a runaway cost like that?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the House will realize that I have not verified all the statements by the Auditor General, but each minister has been informed of them and is studying the report. They will be prepared to deal with each particular case that the hon. member or other hon. members opposite might want to concern themselves about. This particular one would come under the Minister of Transport, and I can undertake to ensure that he will be informed of the hon. member's concern.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I am one, and I am sure there are countless thousands across the country, who believes that the Prime Minister, being in charge of this government, simply cannot ignore the problem any longer, having a merry-go-round like the one we have seen this morning. For instance, the gentleman who was in charge of Public Works was promoted this morning. Can the Prime Minister indicate how in the world, presumably under Public Works, the Malton, Toronto, airport additions would increase almost three times over what they were expected to cost? This is not something he has to confirm: it is there; it is a fact. What is the Prime Minister's explanation? Don't shuck it off on somebody else.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I must confess, in all humility, that I do not know the detail of every item of expenditure by the government. That is why we have ministers with different departments. The ministers will gladly give the answers and explanations for the cases which interest the hon. member. I do not think it is too much to suggest to the hon. member that it is not possible for the Prime Minister to verify, personally, every expenditure by every minister in every department. That is indeed, why we have an Auditor General, so that he can make this kind of report. It is the duty and the role of the opposition to ask questions on it either in the House or in committee when the estimates of the particular minister are before the committee.

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I would have expected that since the Prime Minister and his ministers have had notice of these items for many weeks, it is also the duty of the Prime