

Oral Questions

involved in that most vital of industries, they will tell him how far employment has come back in that industry as a result of the policies of this Government. They will point out to the Hon. Member the phenomenal increase in the number of motor vehicles sold this year over last year. I believe they will also tell him that the Government is working very closely with the industry, and the unions, in seeing to it that they continue to receive, for a period of time, the protection which is necessary while they modernize and become even more competitive than they have been in the past.

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AGRICULTURE GRAIN FREIGHT RATES

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture. Recently the Minister of Transport said that people should come first, and railways second. In the light of that statement may I ask the Minister of Agriculture how he can ensure that western Canadian farmers can be guaranteed that claim by the Liberal Party when grain freight rates are rising so dramatically, contrary to the projections under the Western Grain Transportation Act, and much to the benefit of the Government and the railways?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member forgets some aspects and parts of that Bill which are very important. That Bill also allows farmers to ship speciality crops. Where previously they have paid as high as \$50 a tonne to ship to Thunder Bay or Vancouver, the rate now, Mr. Speaker, for those crops, including canola seed—which is second in importance to wheat—costs \$7.50. From Saskatoon to Thunder Bay, and from Saskatoon to Vancouver, it costs \$5.50. It cost over \$45 a tonne before, so there are tremendous savings and benefits there. The increases the Hon. Member says are involved are not as great as he intimates to the House, according to the figures I have.

REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL ACTION

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, I am clearly disappointed with the answer of the Minister and his approach. What we are looking for is some assurance from the Minister that the farmers' interests will be protected from open-ended, escalated rail freight rates. How can the Minister ensure that this will be done? And how can farmers have any confidence in the Liberal Party when the Minister of Transport is serving as the policy adviser to Mr. John Turner, who is an active director of the CPR; when the former Chairman of the CPR, Mr. Ian Sinclair, was appointed to the Senate by the Liberal Government, and when you have Mr. Jack Horner, the former Chairman of CNR, heading the Grain Transportation Agency? I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture if he is taking this into account. Is he recommending any action to ensure that the interests of the producers will be preserved?

And what action, if any, is the Minister going to take before the end of June?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, my very action in entering a certain contest should be enough to show the Hon. Member the concern I have for farmers.

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MULTICULTURALISM

FUND GRANTING PROCESS IN ONTARIO

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Multiculturalism. It has to do with a memo from the Ontario Regional Director to the Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Regional Operations. It concerns the grants batching process as it pertains to the whole area of multiculturalism. The memo indicates that comments on Ontario's September and November batches, which is the money going out to various groups in Ontario, would indicate that the headquarter's review is neither coherent nor accurate. It goes on to say that the strongest reservations about the use to which the batching process might be put appear to have come to pass. Instead, a headquarters second guessing process has been institutionalized without any upfront checks and balances, and this has resulted in a situation where grants are inconsistent and inaccurately assessed on a minimum of information, a potential embarrassment to the Minister if the groups are given poor reasons for rejection. My question is an obvious one. What is being done to rectify this rather shabby situation?

• (1450)

Hon. D. M. Collenette (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Mr. Speaker, I have not seen that memo and I am somewhat surprised at its contents. As with any federated organization, and the Government of Canada obviously runs its operations in that way in that we have regional offices across the country, from time to time there are creative disagreements or tensions between decisions taken in Ottawa and those taken in the regions. This is a normal course of events in Canadian federalism, and it may very well be that someone feels there is perhaps a little imbalance and perhaps too much direction from the Minister's office or our officials here in Ottawa. It is something I totally reject, but I certainly would be prepared to look at the memo and discuss it with the Hon. Member, or report back to him before the committee dealing with the Estimates meets next week. We might want to have an in depth discussion at that point.

Mr. Murta: Mr. Speaker, the memo is not exactly new. It is dated December 16, 1983. It is from the Ontario Regional Director to the Assistant Under-Secretary of State. If nothing has been done to change this rather shabby process in the past, I suggest very strongly that something should be done.