

Inquiries of the Ministry

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Baldwin: We hope he has returned a wiser man, from the east. Will the minister take up with his colleague the Secretary of State for External Affairs the possibility of a representative of the government discussing with representatives of the government of Mainland China the question of wheat sales, unless, of course, this runs contrary to the indicated views of the Prime Minister on government involvement in the sale of Canadian wheat?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I thank the hon. gentleman for welcoming me back. I promise to keep my Asiatic smile.

On the subject of communications with China, I wish to rectify what seems to be a false impression on the other side of the house. We are in touch with China. We had a trade commissioner at the Canton Fair. As a matter of fact the trade commissioner was good enough to meet me in Bangkok to report to me on what was happening there. In the second place, the assistant chief commissioner of the Wheat Board was in Hong Kong recently discussing wheat sales with the interested parties on the communist China side.

WHEAT—POSSIBILITY OF DEFAULT IN U.S.S.R. AGREEMENT

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Would the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce end the uncertainty and confusion sweeping the Canadian grain market by advising this house, and indirectly western farmers, whether the U.S.S.R. has in fact cancelled a substantial part of its order and is considering whether it should even pay for wheat it has already received, citing grain damage.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): This is not so. Negotiations between the Wheat Board and Export Khleb, the agency of the U.S.S.R. government, are continuing. The situation in the U.S.S.R. is not such, however, that they have found it possible to live up to their commitment to Canada, but there is no reason to believe they will not honour that commitment.

[Later:]

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Do I understand from the minister's answer with regard to the commitment of the U.S.S.R. that there is a question whether this long standing

agreement—a matter of three years—will be honoured?

Mr. Pepin: That is not what I said. I said there was no reason to believe that the U.S.S.R. would not honour the commitment it has with Canada with respect to wheat purchases.

[Translation]

WHEAT—POSSIBILITY OF BROADENING LIST OF PURCHASERS

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

As he just said, he must have talked about wheat here and there during his trip. Did he find in other countries or on other continents new customers for our wheat surpluses?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, everywhere in the world today there are wheat surpluses. In Australia, for instance, the government just took steps to restrict the production of wheat. The Australian government will not take the responsibility of selling more than 350 million bushels and everything produced in excess will be at the farmers' own risk.

I just want to point out that overproduction of wheat in the world at the present time affects not only Canada but all the exporting countries also.

[English]

WHEAT—STATIONING OF SALES REPRESENTATIVE IN MAINLAND CHINA

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of trade and commerce. Will the Canadian government consider stationing a permanent sales representative of the Canadian Wheat Board in China once diplomatic recognition has been achieved?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wonder whether this is the type of question that should be asked now.

WHEAT—POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL SALES RESULTING FROM VISIT OF MINISTER TO ASIA AND ANTIPODES

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I should like to find out from the minister of trade and commerce, following his safari in Asia, whether he would inform the house about possible increases in sales of wheat that have been