

Inquiries of the Ministry

Prime Minister. In view of his statement that the bilingual proposal was simply a resolution passed at a political conference, may I ask the right hon. gentleman whether this applies equally to the other resolutions passed at the recent Liberal convention, and particularly does it apply to the resolution expressing the hope that medicare might be introduced prior to July 1, 1968?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker. My hon. friend will know from his long experience with conventions of his own party that resolutions serve as a guide, and we on this side take them very seriously as a guide to policy. But resolutions themselves do not establish policy, and in respect of the resolution on bilingualism, which we undoubtedly will consider, I would like to point out that the policy of the government on that matter was laid down in the house on April 6.

That policy provided for bilingualism in the civil service being achieved under conditions which would be fair to all concerned and not prejudice the position of those who do not have the good fortune to be bilingual. We treat that resolution seriously. We treat all resolutions seriously because they are guides to policy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: Then as a supplementary question may I ask the Prime Minister whether the resolution suggesting that medicare would be introduced prior to July 1, 1968 represents government policy.

Mr. Pearson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As soon as we are fortunate enough to reach the committee stage of the medicare bill my hon. friend the Minister of National Health and Welfare, who is responsible for the bill, will be making proposals which I am sure will satisfy the hon. member in that regard.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct to the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) a supplementary question to that put by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas) on bilingualism.

Could he tell us when the commission on bilingualism and biculturalism will submit its report and whether he has heard anything about that?

[Mr. Douglas.]

[English]

Mr. Pearson: No, Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to report. I have tried to keep in touch with the commission from time to time, expressing the hope that they will be able to make a report without undue delay.

GRAIN**INQUIRY AS TO ARRANGEMENTS FOR CROP MOVEMENT**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a question to the Minister of Finance who answers in the house for the Canadian Wheat Board. In view of the very large crop, the harvesting of which has just been completed in western Canada, and in view of what appear to be very favourable marketing conditions for this crop, have there been any meetings between the minister and the wheat board and the railways to establish targets for the amount of grain to be shipped during this crop year, as was done last year? If so, what targets or goals have the railways accepted for this shipping period?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, both the Minister of Transport and I have been very much concerned to see that the wheat board moves as much grain as possible. The railways are co-operating to an unprecedented degree. Indeed, it is now quite clear, as a result of their gearing up for these large movements, that the possibilities for crop movement are very much greater than anyone had ever thought.

Mr. Olson: As a supplementary question I would like to ask the minister whether the railways have given any commitment as to the amount of grain they would be prepared to move between now and July 31 next, such as they gave the year previously?

Mr. Sharp: We have not discussed specific targets, Mr. Speaker. We are quite satisfied that the amount of wheat or grain they will move will be far larger than ever before, and we do not want to limit them by putting a target on the total.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Burnaby-Coquitlam): As a further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, in the minister's discussions with the railways was he able to find out whether there will be more box cars available this year than last year, and whether the railways have succeeded in reducing the number of Canadian box cars which are located in the United States?