

Oral Questions

have been uncovered. The Hon. Member has brought a situation to our attention, and I will see it is pursued to ensure that we are on course.

● (1420)

AUDIT OF CONTRACT PERFORMANCE

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a multibillion dollar defence contract. In the case of Paramex we are talking about a \$1.25 billion subcontract. We are talking about more than fiscal year 1986.

The Minister just indicated that an internal audit is nearly completed and no irregularities have been found up until this time. Can he tell us when that audit is going to be completed? Will he make the information it contains available to the House of Commons?

Also can he tell the House whether or not in fiscal years 1984-85 and 1985-86 such audits were undertaken and whether or not the Government became aware of irregularities, many of which are noted in internal company documents I will make available to the RCMP tomorrow? They raise many questions of irregular practices.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Why are you holding them?

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, a number of allegations have been made with respect to this contract for the last couple of years. When these matters are brought to our attention we investigate them. This is a sizeable contract and the Government accepts responsibility to continue monitoring and we will do so. The Hon. Member brought a situation to our attention and I undertake on behalf of the Minister to respond very soon.

Mr. Forrestall: Why is he hanging on to the documents?

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AGRICULTURE

DROUGHT IN WESTERN CANADA—GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. The very serious drought in western Canada continues. Canadians all across the country are shocked by the images they see on television every night of dust storms, dry pastures, and cattle without feed.

The measures announced by the Minister yesterday for long-term well construction are appreciated and will be useful to the long-term supply of water. Can he say when he is going to announce a program for transportation of feed to the drought areas or movement of cattle out so as to stabilize a very uncertain situation for livestock herds in western Canada?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the tour of the drought area that my colleagues and I participated in Monday afternoon and evening was very useful. We saw it first-hand and of course there were no surprises whatsoever. My colleagues and I have been kept informed as well as our people in the field, primarily from PFRA. The meeting on Tuesday with farm leaders and our provincial counterparts was also very productive. The Hon. Member knows at that time we announced an additional \$12 million to be used for the transportation of water supplies, the drilling of wells, purchase of pumps and pipes, as well as the hauling of water.

We have asked the drought committee to provide us with further recommendations within 10 days or two weeks to deal with what I like to term phase 3. That of course will be the response by both levels of government to deal with the livestock aspect of the drought.

PROPOSED CATTLE HERD STABILIZATION PROGRAM

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 1985 the Government made a commitment to establish a long-term disaster assistance program. It was very apparent to most people in western Canada that the drought was going to be very serious. Does the Minister really believe he can wait for another three weeks while more committee meetings take place before he announces a stabilization program for cattle herds? This might result in the dispersal of herds and a drop in prices, not to mention the uncertainty of livestock owners over whether or not they should disperse those herds because of the uncertainty over whether a program will be put in place and what the funding level will be.

I believe \$50 per stock cow was provided in 1985 by the two levels of government. I hope the Minister could announce at least that much and perhaps a great deal more, because we are dealing with a drought in the spring of the year, not in the late summer.

● (1425)

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I must remind the Hon. Member that I did not say three weeks, I said a week, 10 days, or 2 weeks at the most. One thing we have to realize is that this is really at the request of the producers themselves. There is a good understanding between livestock producers and ourselves and a high level of confidence that they share with our Government because of the way in which we have responded to their problems in the past. We must recognize as well that decisions are already being made by producers based on their own particular situation.

Some producers in the Vulcan area have already decided to move liner loads of cattle from that area some 700 miles north to Peace River at a cost of about \$1,500, many of which are cows. They will have to come back. If we have to get into phase 3, then everyone knows there will be retroactivity provisions anyhow.