

Oral Questions

REQUEST THAT MINISTERS CONFER

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, in view of the present economic situation, especially in Montreal, it was to be expected that there would be quite a bit of competition for this Air Canada contract. Offers were made by a dozen or more candidates. The Board of Directors of Air Canada, which has jurisdiction over such matters, established fourteen criteria according to which the acceptability of the tenders was to be assessed. The Government was asked whether these criteria were sufficient, and on behalf of the Government, I said yes, and a decision is to be made today. Among these criteria, cost is, of course, a major factor. I have sufficient information to know that there is no substantial difference in price between the various tenders that were made. This \$10 million is pure fantasy.

Mr. La Salle: Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary. Since the press is, of course, being very vocal about a proposal that we find unacceptable, especially considering the economic situation, could the Minister publish the findings of the investigation he requested, with any considerations that might indicate the contract should be awarded to one company rather than another, even if the figure of \$10 million is not entirely accurate? Could the Minister publish information that would help us to understand better the reasons for selecting Beaver Hall?

Mr. Pepin: Madam Speaker, I imagine that if the Board of Directors of Air Canada makes the decision anticipated by my hon. colleague, it will give a full explanation of its actions. I imagine that they will issue a press release this afternoon, stating why they made the choice they did. Therefore, if my hon. friend is not satisfied with the explanations Air Canada will be giving this afternoon, I shall then see whether there is a case for providing further explanations.

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● (1430)

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

QUERY RESPECTING FALL WHEAT PAYMENT

Mr. Len Gustafson (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture due to the absence of the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board from this House, and who is busy in the other place mailing out volumes of Liberal propaganda and comical cartoons. Will the Minister answer a question with regard to important matters concerning farmers and state whether there will be a wheat payment made this fall from the Canadian Wheat Board to the western grain farmer? Will that payment be made before the year's end, and can the Minister give any indication of the size of that payment?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the answer is no to both questions.

Mr. Len Gustafson (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, we received exactly the same kind of answer about three weeks ago from the Minister when asked a question in the House regarding the Western Grain Stabilization Program. Would the Minister make it a point to contact the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and determine whether he can bring answers for the western Canadian farmers, both in regard to the Wheat Board payments and the Grain Stabilization payments?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member knows full well that there are time limitations on both of those Programs. Until that time is reached, then the decisions are made. The Wheat Board will make them in due course. Those payments will be made on the sales and that type of thing, and he knows that full well, if he studied the legislation and how it operates.

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METRIC CONVERSION

APPLICATION TO MILK PRODUCERS

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Madam Speaker, I think everyone in the House realizes that there will be a long hard winter ahead for a million and a half unemployed, coupled with those on welfare, and not to mention those who qualify for neither, in being able to put enough bread and milk on the table. I ask the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs how he justifies forcing milk producers, such as Beckers and the like, to do away with their imperial measure full quart and raise the price of milk by up to 40 cents a packaged unit in order that the administration can have its own way as a Liberal Government in forcing metric on the Canadian people?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I suspect that the Hon. Member's statement has no more basis in fact than the petition he tabled in the House a number of weeks ago, a petition that, according to his own words, contained 135,000 names and which he tabled here in the House on behalf of the *Toronto Sun*. Upon checking the petition, we realized that there were certainly not more than 75,000 names and not even that many addresses. Furthermore, after I wrote to some of the people who signed this so-called petition, some wrote back that they had never signed the petition and that, on the contrary, they were in favour of the metric system.

[English]

Mr. Domm: That had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the 135,000 signatures, not 135 as the translation reported.