

grain elevators on the prairies are plugged, plus the fact that the Canadian Wheat Board is 32 million bushels behind in export clearance—I might add that many farmers have grain stored outside, on the ground—can the minister tell the House and the farmers what immediate steps the government is taking to correct this serious situation and get the grain moving?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the statement that we are a certain number of bushels behind is only accurate in relation to some very high targets of exports which we have set. Indeed, our targets are for record exports. The right hon. member for Prince Albert laughs, but that is twice as much as was ever exported in any one year during the time of his government.

We and the Wheat Board are examining every method to improve turn-around, and such matters as possible use of a bulk handling facility at Vancouver in addition to the regular terminals are being looked at. I am confident that as the months go by and the snow difficulties on the prairies are behind us, we will move toward our target and end the year with a record export figure.

Mr. Stewart (Marquette): Mr. Speaker, the figures I used and which the minister questioned are from the president of the Manitoba pool elevators. My supplementary question is as follows: As it is an unfortunate fact that Manitoba granaries are the last to be emptied each year, and as Manitoba farmer's grain deliveries are 9.2 million bushels behind last year, will special attention be paid to this situation particularly before the farmers face the spring thaw and road restrictions?

● (1442)

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I was not questioning the hon. member's figures at all, but just putting them in perspective. When we said last month that we had had a difficult January, we had a January in which we exported a record volume of grain, so the difficulty was somewhat relative. I assure the hon. member that the Canadian Wheat Board and I are extremely sympathetic to the particular difficulties of the Manitoba producers who have had to wait this year for delivery opportunities, because in reaching a record volume of exports the Wheat Board has to try to make use of cars and railway equipment in the most sensible fashion. This means, during the winter season, taking the grain from the farther distant points into Thunder Bay and the east, knowing that when the record movement will have to take place during May, June, July and August, the closer points in Manitoba can be served more efficiently and effectively, with a faster turn-around. It is a difficulty.

I am glad the cash advance programs are available to help farmers. They are very significant. I can assure producers in Manitoba that quotas will be opened very rapidly, not necessarily before the spring break-up but certainly during May, June, July and August.

An hon. Member: Around election time!

Oral Questions

Mr. Lang: Before, during and after an election, as we have shown, we have set records every year without regard to that question.

An hon. Member: Same old story.

An hon. Member: Nobody believes you.

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IMMIGRATION

STEPS TO ASSIST LEBANESE IN JOINING RELATIVES IN CANADA

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration? In light of the very serious and, to say the least, sad situation now existing in Lebanon, can the minister tell the House what action his department is taking to assist Lebanese affected by the conflict to join their anxious relatives in Canada, and if special consideration will be extended to those actually in Canada?

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for giving me notice of this particular question.

An hon. Member: I think it was the other way around.

Mr. Cullen: I might say that the initiative came from the hon. member, not from my department, for this question.

An hon. Member: You are smiling.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, cases arising out of the situation in Lebanon will be treated on a priority basis. Those Lebanese presently in Canada, of course, will be looked at sympathetically and no one will be asked to return to that particular region. In addition to that, we will look very sympathetically at other cases of people who want to apply for immigrant status here, and we will consider those who seek employment. We will deal as sympathetically as we can and in an understanding way, given the problem.

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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

ESTABLISHMENT OF FORESTRY POLICY

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): My question is for the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations. I would like to refer him to the approach made to the federal government during the recent first ministers' conference in support of the establishment of a federal forestry policy, in particular the five-point terms of reference that were enumerated.

Could the minister tell the House whether it is the intention of the federal government to reinstitute a national forestry policy again, a policy which could address itself to the very