

Oral Questions

of grain required. This year the demand for a large volume of high protein wheat, for instance, has led the wheat board at different times to give a preference, at least in time of delivery, to those areas where high protein wheat is obtainable.

Mr. Neil: Mr. Speaker, I would like to find out from the minister if it is the intention of the Wheat Board to equalize the number of bushels per acre delivered. I think specifically of the Moose Jaw area where one farmer can deliver to Moose Jaw on a 12-bushel quota and one to Pasqua on only a nine-bushel quota. This is exactly the same kind of wheat grown side by side.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, in the last conversation I had with the Canadian Wheat Board about ten days ago it was indicated to me that the board's objective was essentially to equalize on the nine-bushel quota. Any move ahead of the nine-bushel quota would have been solely with the objective of obtaining the kind of grain required. I would want to re-check with the board, but I would not expect the board to be able to equalize on that basis in the course of this crop year.

Mr. Towers: And you say you haven't been out-hustled?

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[Translation]

BILINGUALISM

SANCTIONS TO BE APPLIED TO EMPLOYEES REFUSING TO USE BOTH LANGUAGES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board. Yesterday during a press conference he gave in Ottawa, he urged the civil servants of the Montreal area to use both official languages. I would therefore like to ask the minister what kind of sanctions he intends to apply to this group?

[English]

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the sanctions applicable to employees who do not fulfill the obligations of their functions are well known to the bargaining agents and members of the unions. They range from reprimand to suspension, and suspension can be for different periods of time. Finally, there is the possibility of dismissal if an offence—and I call them offences—is sustained or repeated over a period of time.

[Translation]

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question.

Since his predecessor, or the government, had promised to give a premium to civil servants who work in both languages, could the minister advise us how he can threaten to suspend these people while he, his predecessor and his government have totally refused to respect the commitments made a year and a half ago?

[English]

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, that is not an accurate statement. The government did commit itself to the inauguration of the payment of compensation for the delivery of services in both official languages, with the details to be worked out within the government and then through consultation, particularly with the national joint council. The committee of the government, which has been reconfirmed by me on behalf of the government on several occasions, and again yesterday, was that such payment will be retroactive to November 1, 1976. One of the reasons for the delay in working out the details of this is the complexity of the issue itself which has been exacerbated because we have undertaken, as is publicly known, a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Official Languages Act, including that implementation that particularly affects the public service. The payment of compensation for bilingual services is related to many factors, which are the subject of this comprehensive review. It has been indicated that that review is close to completion, and when it is completed I will be in consultation with the bargaining agents and with the national joint council to work out the details of that compensation plan.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

SUGAR—FAILURE OF RETAIL PRICE TO DECLINE IN PROPORTION TO DECLINE IN WHOLESALE PRICE—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the acting Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs or, in his absence, the acting acting minister or perhaps to the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the fact that recently disclosed information shows that the wholesale price of sugar has declined significantly over the last few months and in view of the fact that the retail price of sugar has not declined at all in proportion to the decline in the wholesale price, can the Acting Prime Minister tell the House if he will instruct the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to consider action under the Combines Investigation Act against the chain stores which are keeping up the price of sugar? If not, can he tell the House why he has not so instructed the department to undertake that kind of action?

● (1200)

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might be permitted to respond. I have been in conversation with the Anti-Inflation Board in this respect. They have monitored that situation and their conclusion was that the retail price change or the situation the hon. member referred to, was substantially confined to the Toronto market where previously the retail price of sugar had been used as a loss leader in retail food operations. The conclusion was that, throughout the country, the retail price had been tracking the wholesale price of sugar over a period of time. They are keeping the Toronto situation under close watch.