

Oral Questions

now reached the point at which we need further authorization from parliament to raise the ceiling—

Mr. Speaker: Order. May we have order, please? There are a number of hon. members seeking to ask supplementaries on this subject. I suggest we return to it later. Clearly, we are again getting into debate. I will recognize the hon. member in a moment, but at this point the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre.

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TRANSPORT**ALLEGED UNFITNESS OF TRACK TO CARRY GRAIN HOPPER CARS—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Transport arising out of a matter which was raised in the House last May and June and revived again yesterday in a committee of the House. In view of the statement made yesterday by an official of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce to the effect that almost half of the railway track in western Canada is unfit to carry the hopper cars the government purchased for grain movement, can the minister advise what action is being taken by the railways to upgrade this track to standards which will permit wider use of the cars and tell us whether the government is requiring the railway companies to take any action to ensure this upgrading?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): I will take that question as notice, Mr. Speaker.

GRAIN HOPPER CARS—ALLEGED UNRESOLVED CONDITIONS OF PURCHASE

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): That is the sixth or seventh question the hon. gentleman has taken as notice. I hope he will reply to all of them one of these days. My supplementary is directed to the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. It concerns the same matter. In view of the fact that a number of conditions were laid down by the government when supplying these hopper cars to the railways for grain movement, and since these have not been resolved, will the minister tell us briefly what these conditions are and which ones are in dispute with the railways?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): The premise stated by the hon. member is not accurate. The hopper cars are going into service on those lines where they can be used to greatest advantage. It is true there are many lines that cannot handle them, just as there are many elevators that do not have adequate scales for large-sized modern trucks. Both these questions, and the urgent need to develop better facilities to handle the hopper cars and the trucks, are searching questions to be resolved in the course of discussions at the Canada Grains Council level about the future of the grain handling and transportation system. That is exactly why I attach such importance to those discussions, and to moving ahead with them so that we can bring about improvements on the positive side

[Mr. Gillespie.]

instead of always being concerned about the negative side of the problems that go with new developments.

Mr. Benjamin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the minister has answered the question I asked the Minister of Transport but he has not answered the question I asked him. What conditions laid down by the government are not resolved with the railroads in connection with the handling of these hopper cars? Would he specify these conditions that have not yet been resolved?

Mr. Lang: There are no conditions laid down that have not been resolved. As I indicated to the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar a couple of weeks ago, an agreement was reached between the Canadian Wheat Board and the railways with regard to the initial use of the cars. A further and final agreement is being developed at this stage. The actual use of the cars is a matter which, under that agreement, is basically one for discussion between the Canadian Wheat Board and the railways. Those discussions are proceeding without any hitch whatsoever, and I know of no difference of view between the railways and the Canadian Wheat Board about the best use of those cars.

GRAIN HOPPER CARS—PAYMENT OF COSTS OF OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): In view of the fact that the railways are making use of the hopper cars on a free basis, can the minister say whether or not the government or the Wheat Board has been required by the railways to pay operating costs, repairs and depreciation costs in respect of these cars?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): The interim agreement deals with some of these questions. The initial cost of maintenance is at present being borne by the railways. The question of the final disposition of these costs is one of the matters which is being further discussed in connection with the final agreement. The position, basically, that I have taken throughout is that the objective is to assure that the additional grain moves, and that no additional profit accrues to the railways through the use of the cars. Our basic provision of the cars and the capital involved was made with the objective of ensuring that the additional grain does move.

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[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**VIET NAM—SUPERVISORY COMMISSION—STEPS TO PROTECT CANADIAN PERSONNEL AGAINST DRUG TRAFFIC**

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Could the minister assure the House that every step has been taken to protect the Canadian mission in Viet Nam against the use and traffic of drugs?