

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** As the hon. member knows, I have intervened in a number of cases. Following his representation and those of others, I did, indeed, contact Bulgarian officials to look into the case of Mr. Kolev. I was advised by Bulgarian officials that Mr. Kolev is in prison because of possession of a false passport which, as the hon. member will know, would also be an action not condoned in this country.

● (1150)

While I would understand the reason for his trying to obtain such a passport, it does not allow any legal ground on which I can proceed to intervene in another country. On humanitarian grounds, however, I would inform the hon. member that we have made representations to the Bulgarian government that all necessary medical attention be given to Mr. Kolev, and also that he be relieved from any physical responsibility.

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**TRANSPORT**

CROWNSNEST PASS RATES—REQUEST REPORT OF TASK FORCE BE MADE PUBLIC

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West):** Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Transport. In view of the efforts by the private grain trade, the CPR and a number of Conservatives in recent years to destroy the Crownsnest Pass rates, and in view of reports that the hon. member for Lisgar, the chairman of the task force set up by the minister, said yesterday in his report to the minister that he will be requesting that the Crow rates be reviewed, I would ask the minister whether he has received the report from the hon. member for Lisgar; does it contain any such recommendation; will he make the report public; and will he assure the House that if the hon. member for Lisgar did say that, it will not be government policy?

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, the Crownsnest Pass freight rates is a matter on which I have received representations from interested parties in the grain trade, producer organizations and, indeed, members of the NDP. In so far as the report of the task force is concerned, I have not yet received it. I expect it will be in my hands within a couple of weeks or so. It would be my intention to make that report public.

I have not seen the report, so obviously I cannot tell the hon. member whether there is any reference to the statutory rate; but I can assure the hon. member that matter was not within the terms of reference or the task force mandate.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that three successive royal commissions said the Crow rates should be retained, and in view of the fact that the Hall commission—which made the definitive recommendation—recommended that the Crow rates be retained and the nation as a whole pay the railways the difference between the Crow rates and the compensatory rate, does the minister realize that the differ-

[Mr. Flis.]

ence between the Crow rate and the compensatory rate is 13 times the Crow rate and the commercial rate from Wakaw to Vancouver, which would cost farmers another \$1.73 a bushel? Will the minister urge the government and his Prime Minister, and quit being obstinate and stubborn like his predecessor, to have—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

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**THE CANADIAN ECONOMY**

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTEREST AND INFLATION RATES IN CANADA AND U.S.

**Mr. Paul E. McRae (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance dealing with the difference between the real, prime interest rate and the inflation rate. At no time in the last five years has the real interest rate spread between the United States and Canada exceeded 3 per cent. It now exceeds 5 per cent. Will the minister look at this significant difference to see whether interest rates are really too high in this country?

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. gentleman opposite, that interest rates are too high. I would like to see lower interest rates. The point is that there is no reasonable alternative at this moment. I am quite prepared to look at what the hon. gentleman wants me to look at, the difference in the real interest rates between the U.S. and Canada. That is constantly being reviewed and looked at, in any event. I would ask the hon. gentleman to remember that our inflation rate and the U.S. inflation rate, once you take out the energy factor, is pretty much the same.

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**NATIONAL REVENUE**

POLICY ON DUTY-FREE SHOPS AT BORDER POINTS

**Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Windsor-Walkerville):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. I understand he is now considering a change in government policy which does now allow duty-free shops for land travellers at border points such as Windsor. Would he tell the House whether he is prepared to announce a decision on that and, if not, when he might be in a position to do so?

**Hon. Walter Baker (President of the Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, legislation has been on the books to allow that since 1975, and I often wondered why the former government did not do it.

I wish to inform the hon. member, however, that at cabinet yesterday approval was given to the principle of providing duty-free shops at land frontier border points, and in a relatively short period I will be announcing the criteria for applicants. I want to thank the hon. member for giving me this opportunity of announcing new government policy.