

Oral Questions

ers of the Wheat Board, Mr. F.M. Hetland, has stated that 4,000 more rail cars in grain service would generate more than \$700 million a year in additional foreign sales and foreign exchange for Canada, may I ask the minister whether he will now require the railroads to repair and put into place at least 5,000 more cars for grain movement so that we can enlarge our export capacity to China and other countries?

Mr. Lang: The House knows that we have held discussions with the CNR and entered into a successful arrangement with them to repair 1,000 boxcars, half at the cost of the government and half at the cost of the railway. We have sought a similar arrangement with Canadian Pacific and initially received a negative reply. I have supplied CP with some further argument and I am now awaiting an early response from them in relation to the same proposal.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

EVALUATION OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the President of the Treasury Board. He will recall that the Speech from the Throne indicated that parliament would be given an opportunity to review all evaluations of major programs undertaken by the government. The Comptroller-General is presently conducting such a review, but the President of the Treasury Board has indicated that such reviews will be confidential. It seems to me there is a conflict here, and I hope the minister can clear it up. Are these reviews presently being undertaken by the Comptroller-General confidential, or will the public be allowed access to the findings? After all, we are talking about waste and inefficiency.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the statement in the Speech from the Throne represented, I thought, a good advance. I thought the hon. member, along with others, would welcome it. This is something we have all wanted to see. Evaluations of major programs, as indicated in the throne speech, will be available to parliament.

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TRANSPORT

INTERPROVINCIAL FREIGHT RATES

Mr. John Wise (Elgin): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport: it relates to the proposed 20 per cent increase in freight rates affecting food and food-related items moving between Ontario and Quebec. This latest increase would be in addition to the increase of an identical amount imposed one year ago. I am sure the minister is aware of the objections which have been lodged by the Ontario Food Processors' Association and I would ask him whether any decision has been made to prevent this freight rate increase.

[Mr. Benjamin.]

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport and Minister of Justice): The minister has very limited power in relation to freight rate increases. These are filed by the railways, under the law, with the Canadian Transport Commission and there are certain narrow grounds on which they may be challenged there. I have no doubt the usual procedures will be followed in relation to this proposed increase.

Mr. Wise: Is it the minister's intention to accept, or to impose, another rate increase of such magnitude, particularly in light of the effect such a measure would have on consumer prices, especially in Ontario and Quebec?

Mr. Lang: For reasons which were fully set out by the MacPherson royal commission on transportation, the government was not given power to oversee individual rates imposed by the railways from time to time. In areas where competition was seen as being an adequate way of controlling rates—and this was seen as applying particularly in highly populated areas of Ontario and Quebec—the theory was that competition would have a restraining influence upon the imposition of rate increases.

As I indicated in my earlier answer, it is not a matter of my imposing a rate: that is a silly thing for the hon. member to say. Indeed, even my dislike of a rate can have no impact, because I do not have power in relation to that rate.

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INDUSTRY

PRODUCTIVITY INCENTIVES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. As the principal reason for this country losing manufacturing jobs at the rate of 11,000 a month is that productivity here remains well below the level in the United States, thus causing our costs to be higher than theirs and making our products uncompetitive with those of our principal competitors, would the minister advise us when he intends to introduce productivity incentives to be paid in direct proportion to increases in productivity, so that we can stop this serious loss of manufacturing jobs which is going on at an annual rate of more than 100,000 jobs?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I want to thank the hon. member for his question, and assure the House that I shall be here for a long, long time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: I am very confident that my services as Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce will reflect beneficially upon the economy of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!