

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jeanne Sauv  (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, these are considered public utilities. This is the reason they operate under the very severe regulations of the CRTC. The application presently before the CRTC will, I believe, be heard in the course of the next month. As I understand it, there will be five weeks of public hearings on the merits of the application. I have full confidence that the CRTC is fully equipped to deal with such a request.

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● (1442)

**TRADE**NEGOTIATION OF INTERNATIONAL WHEAT AGREEMENT TO  
BENEFIT PRODUCERS

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. It has nothing to do with freight rates, railroads or those other matters which ordinarily come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Transport and which, apparently, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has now taken over as his own—at any rate as far as the prairie provinces are concerned. Of the utmost importance and concern to those provinces is the International Wheat Agreement.

In view of the comparatively low prices for products such as wheat, the tremendous interest rate and the fantastic price which has to be paid for implements, agriculture is in a serious position. Is it a fact, as stated in certain specialized sections of the American press, that practically every impediment—if not every impediment—or roadblock in the way of the International Wheat Agreement has been swept aside by reason of the United States agreeing generally to the need for one, and also to the price? Would the minister say whether he is optimistic that on the basis of the present situation the farm population and, indeed, the nation as a whole, may look forward to an early completion of the discussions in Geneva and to an International Wheat Agreement which will bring some hope to our farmers?

**Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank the right hon. gentleman for that question. As he knows, I am deeply concerned about the price of grain.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Horner:** My department is watching closely the talks which are going on at this moment in Geneva. An attempt is being made there to set up what might be called a reserve or buffer stock which could be drawn upon when the trigger price is activated. What that price will be, and the amount going into the reserve stock, are matters still under negotiation. The United States appears to be working very hard on this occasion to set up a new agreement. We are certainly co-operating with them, but we intend to watch carefully both the price and the amount going into this buffer stock, as well as the amount of

[Mr. Stollery.]

stock withdrawn from it, since these questions are of vital importance to western Canada.

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**FISHERIES**REQUEST FOR CLOSING OF RIVER SYSTEMS CONTAMINATED BY  
MERCURY

**Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries. Yesterday, as reported at page 3290 of *Hansard*, the minister stated that his colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, had been misquoted when she said she would ask him to close the English-Wabigoon River system on account of mercury contamination there. I now have a transcript of the hon. lady's interview, which was recorded on tape. Asked whether the closure of the river system was a dead issue, she stated:

It is not, and I am ready to write again to my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, who has the final authority to close the river system to sport fishing—

In view of that statement, will the minister now make a commitment to recognize the request of his cabinet colleague and close this polluted river system?

**Hon. Rom o LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and the Environment):** I thank the hon. member for raising this question. I was hoping that while I was on my feet for another purpose, I might be able to correct the record. We checked with the minister's office—the minister herself was out of town—and were informed she had intended to say “the provincial minister”. However, this was not the case; it was to me she intended to direct the request. I hereby correct the record and apologize to the hon. member and to the House for having made the statement I did.

As to the substance of the issue, it is obvious that the province of Ontario administers the inland water fishery. This was the situation for many years before I became minister. We proclaim, by order in council, the changes in the regulations which are requested. If we were to close the river system, we would have no way of enforcing such closure. We do not carry out conservation work; we only do inspection work. So the only effective way in which that system could be closed would be by the provincial authorities, who would then assign protection officers to the area. I might add that there is no commercial fishing going on, and the inspection branch of my department has prohibited the sale of fish taken from the rivers concerned.

**Mr. Symes:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the minister can stand with a clear conscience and try once again to pass the buck on an issue which has been with us for eight years, especially since the health and safety of a great many people is involved. The hon. gentleman's officials admitted in committee that the federal government has power to close the river to sports fishing, unilaterally. If that action had been taken, I believe we would have been able to devise a policing mechanism. In my opinion, the minister has done nothing more than set up another straw man. Let him close the river—which he