

*Oral Questions*

● (1450)

**CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD**

## USE OF METRIC AND IMPERIAL MEASUREMENT

**Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current-Maple Creek):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. For the past few years western Canadian grain producers have received their sales information in tonnes only. Can the Minister assure producers that in future Canadian Wheat Board final payment statements will provide information in bushels? Can he also encourage the elevator companies to provide similar information on the grain delivery cash tickets?

**Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for his question. I know this is of concern to a lot of farmers in the country. I have had discussions with the Wheat Board regarding final and interim payments and they have assured me they will be looking for ways to put bushels on final payment stubs.

It is my understanding that grain companies are free to communicate with their customers in whatever measure they choose, imperial or metric. So it is up to the grain companies. Bearing in mind that the grain companies, in western Canada at least, are largely owned by the producers themselves through co-operatives, there should be no problem if the producers wish to see that they have information available to them in bushels as well as tonnes.

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**THE ECONOMY**

## EXCHANGE VALUE OF DOLLAR—ROLE OF SPECULATORS

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. He indicated, in response to my Leader, that speculators were the root cause of some of the problems regarding the level of the dollar and high interest rates. Is he aware that many of those speculators are the chief financial officers of Canadian corporations who are driving down our dollar and benefiting from high interest rates at the same time? Is he prepared to allow those speculators to benefit from their actions here in Canada and in the U.S., over and against protecting the public of Canada who have to foot the bill?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I never used that expression in the answer to his Leader, and he knows that. What he should recognize is that the activity in the exchange market is a result of thousands and thousands of decisions, sure, by people in corporations, but also by individuals, as well as people outside the country. The Minister of Finance cannot control those, and I am not going to try. What we can do is try to moderate the influence of those decisions, to try to lean against the movement in both interest rates and exchange rates, and try to introduce a degree of stability back into the market and get interest rates down.

## REQUEST FOR ACTION AGAINST SPECULATORS

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Finance not aware that the average Canadian does not care and is not in any way immediately affected by a lower Canadian dollar, but he is most definitely affected by higher interest rates? Why will the Minister not move now to say to the speculators: "You cannot benefit both ways here in Canada", and then take steps to protect the average Canadian from high interest rates?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, we are taking steps to protect Canadians from the impact of high interest rates. As the press release of the Governor of the Bank of Canada said earlier today, if things had not been done the way they had been done in the exchange and interest rate markets, interest rates would have been higher today. We cannot control rates, and I am not going to try to control rates like a big lever, which the Hon. Member would like to have us do. This is a free market we live in, and we should appreciate the reason we live in a free market is so we can enjoy the freedoms which have made this country, and other countries like it, great.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

## EXPENDITURE LEVELS

**Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence. He will recall that during last summer's election campaign the Progressive Conservative Party produced a pamphlet regarding national defence entitled, ironically enough, *Honour The Commitment*. It promised greatly increased defence spending. Last Tuesday the President of the Treasury Board stated that cuts in the growth of defence spending could be made "while meeting our international commitments". I ask the Minister of National Defence: Where is the honour? Where is your commitment?

**Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker—

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

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** Careful what you say now, Erik.

**Mr. Nielsen:** I always am.

The Hon. Member's very important question deserves an answer in some detail, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure he would be the first to recognize that it is only reasonable to expect me to meet with some of the officials in the Department, and obtain briefings from them, before attempting to answer that sort of question in any detail. I will get back to him just as soon as I can next week, in response.