

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Korchinski: I want to lay the foundation for my question. Since there will also be an undetermined amount for interest payments, will the minister be making an announcement on a program which will in fact put real cash into the depressed western economy?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): I almost have to lay the foundation for my answer by saying that some of the conclusions of the hon. member are incorrect in view of the fact that the temporary Wheat Reserves Act money, for instance, by and large went to the handling companies rather than to farmers—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Obviously this is a debate between the hon. member and the minister.

[Later:]

Mr. Korchinski: Mr. Speaker, in reply to an earlier question of mine the minister responsible for the Wheat Board indicated that the elevator companies were receiving the payments. Are we to assume that under the new plan the elevator companies will no longer be paid for storage?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the point I was making, of course, was that the amount of money in question had not found its way into the hands of the farmers. The plan will be that far less grain will in fact be in storage so that the expense will not be incurred. On the other hand, the \$100 million which will be going forward to the farmers will be received by them.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS**PROPOSED INCREASE IN AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES—EVIDENCE OF COLLUSION**

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): May I direct a question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In view of the statement by the president of the Canadian Underwriters Association to the effect that there will be a substantial increase in car insurance rates for 1971, and the literature which is sent out by the Insurance Bureau of Canada telling Canadians to get ready for very sharp increases in automobile insurance, may I ask the minister whether his department or any of its agencies are looking into the question of auto insurance rates to see whether or not any increase for 1971 would be fully warranted?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): The insurance industry is examined from time to time by the Combines Investigation Branch for any breach of that Act, but as the hon. member knows the Act does not deal with whether or not price increases are warranted.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): May I ask whether the restrictive Trade Practices Commission or the Prices and Incomes Commission have taken a look at these car insurance rates to see whether or not there is

any collusion between the various companies; and are they investigating to see why the rates charged in Saskatchewan are substantially lower than the rates charged in other provinces and whether this is by design or because of some difference in cost? If they are not looking into the aspect of collusion, will the minister undertake to see that they do and report back to the House?

Mr. Basford: The question went all over the place, Mr. Speaker, including Saskatchewan. The Combines Investigation Act, with which I trust the hon. member is familiar, deals with the question of price conspiracies or price collusion. If there is evidence of that, then there is a breach of the Combines Investigation Act.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I raised this matter last year and the minister undertook to have the Combines Investigation Branch look into the question. Has the minister received any report and is there any evidence of collusion?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, it is my practice, as it was of all my predecessors, not to reveal the results of inquiries except by laying charges in court or, as the Act requires, by inclusion in the annual report of the director.

[Later:]

Mr. Speaker: I believe the hon. member for Peace River has a supplementary to the previous question.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs if we are to assume from his answers that the role of the Prices and Incomes Commission will be, to use the vernacular, restricted to that of "bird watching"?

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[Translation]

AIRPORTS**STE. SCHOLASTIQUE—NUMBERS OF JOBS TO BE CREATED**

Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, I should have liked to put a question to the Minister of Transport, but in his absence I will direct it to his parliamentary secretary.

In connection with the statement made yesterday in Lachute by the President of the Quebec Federation of Labour, Mr. Louis Laberge, is it true that only 2,000 new jobs will be created as a result of the opening of the new international airport in Ste. Scholastique instead of 5,000 as already announced by the government?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Portneuf will admit that the question, as put, is out of order. He is asking the government to confirm or deny a statement made outside the House, and under those conditions, the question cannot be accepted.