

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussi eres (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is making completely unfounded and quite unacceptable allegations. It is contrary to Department practice, and he knows it, to make arbitrary decisions about the tax situation of any taxpayer. The same thing goes for charitable organizations. I would ask him to act more responsibly and, before making judgments, to wonder if in some instances there might not be some facts which justify the Department taking action against charitable organizations which run afoul of the law.

If the questions put by the Hon. Member are meant as an open invitation to charitable organizations to break the law, Mr. Speaker, he is being irresponsible.

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[English]

WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT

WESTERN PROCESSING INDUSTRY—IMPACT OF FREIGHT RATES

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. During the Crow debate the Government made various promises, one of which was that the processing industry in western Canada would be greatly supported by the change in the Crow rate. Right now the crushing industry in western Canada is in trouble, part of which is due to the minimum compensatory freight rates to eastern Canada. Can the Minister tell us his position on these compensatory rates? If it is a position of protection for the farmers and industry in western Canada, will he take that position to the Cabinet and get a favourable decision for western farmers?

● (1140)

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, in the Hon. Member's question he indicated that the compensatory rates were a problem. I am not sure I understand that, because in fact the rates are still in existence. They still provide a subsidized rate for the movement of canola products into eastern Canada. If he is saying that removal of those rates might present a problem, I tend to agree with him. We are presently working to find a solution for that.

I would like to remind the Hon. Member that, during the examination of the grain transportation Bill in committee, it was indicated and written into the Bill that those products would now be eligible for the new Crow rate. They are able to provide for a new rate which will allow export, particularly through the port of Vancouver, and therefore will open up markets. My colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, and I are presently working on a proposal to ensure that there still is assistance. We have a very strong commitment to the maintenance of the canola industry. The Hon. Member should rethink his proposition that the present MCRs are a problem. They are not a problem, and in fact are a great assistance.

Oral Questions

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, I recognize the error I made in the present expenditure.

POSITION OF MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Agriculture. In a speech he made last week in Toronto the Minister of Agriculture gave us an indication of where he stands on this matter and whether he is going to take it to the Cabinet in support of western farmers and western processors?

Mr. McDermid: "Less than direct". That was kind.

Mr. Hovdebo: In the past the Minister has waffled on this matter. Again I point out that the passing of Bill C-155 was based in part on protection and increase of processing in western Canada. Would the Minister of Agriculture give us an indication of where he stands on this matter and whether he is going to take it to the Cabinet in support of western farmers and western processors?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows fully well that the one concern which both the Minister of Transport and I have, is to make sure that the industry stays healthy, whether east or west, and to work out a program for that. The Minister of Transport told the Hon. Member pretty straightforwardly what we are doing. We are working together on a program at the present time.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

PENSION REVIEW BOARD—DELAY IN HEARING APPEALS

Hon. Bud Cullen (Sarnia-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. This past week Mr. Cliff Chadderton, who, I think has some 30 years experience representing veterans, made his 30th appearance before the Veterans Affairs Committee. Among the areas that he expressed concern about was the Pension Review Board. Appeals are now building up. We had backlogs with the Entitlement Board, and it now looks as though we have backlogs with the Pension Review Board. What action is the Minister taking to head this off? Is he expanding the size of the Board or training people? Would he also comment upon whether counsel has been found for this particular Board?

Hon. W. Bennett Campbell (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we looked at the issue of the backlog before the Pension Commission some two and one-half years ago and took administrative measures to speed up the processing of claims to clear up the backlog.

It was obvious to me and to the members of the Commission that, as the backlog was cleared up at the first level, there would be implications for the Entitlement Board and the Pension Review Board area. We have now reached the point where the increased number of entitlement boards and increased number of cases before the Pension Review Board