

Asked if party discipline would be enforced when the matter came to a vote, he said, "I wouldn't think so". Was that expressing government policy or just his own personal fears?

**Mr. Sharp:** Mr. Speaker, may I first thank the right hon. gentleman for his solicitude on behalf of our party. It is rather rare to hear it expressed. I did not make any such statement, Mr. Speaker. I was asked whether there would be a free vote and I said that there will be a government bill which I will support and I did not know whether the whips would be on.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** That is a revised version.

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### GRAIN

#### PURCHASE PRICE OF ADDITIONAL HOPPER CARS TO FACILITATE MOVEMENT—POSSIBILITY OF RAILWAYS SHARING COST

**Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. Can the minister tell the House the total purchase price of the 4,000 hopper cars and will the CPR and the CNR be requested to assume a portion of the cost?

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, the government has made the decision to purchase these cars but the tender call has not yet been made. Therefore there is no confirmed purchase price at this point. The order will be placed by the government.

**Mr. Towers:** Would the minister not consider it to be in the best interests of the Canadian people to ask both these corporations to assume the cost and the administration of this project?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. It seems to me that is a representation. The hon. member for Moose Jaw.

#### PURCHASE OF ADDITIONAL HOPPER CARS TO FACILITATE MOVEMENT—ADEQUACY OF RAIL BEDS

**Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Transport. Is the minister aware of reports about the 4,000 boxcars recently ordered by the federal government being too heavy for the rail beds and that they could thus cause further deterioration of railway equipment? If so, will he guarantee to the House that the 4,000 boxcars are the correct size and weight for the rail beds?

**Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I presume that if some hopper cars are built they will be built according to the capacity of the rails, and if the rails have to be upgraded they will be upgraded.

#### AGREEMENT WITH RAILWAYS ON MAINTENANCE OF HOPPER CARS ALREADY IN USE

**Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the minister in charge of the

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Canadian Wheat Board. I may add that the Minister of Transport will have a lot of investing to do if he is to upgrade all lines in western Canada in view of how they have been allowed to run down. In view of the fact the government is calling for tenders for the building of another 4,000 hopper cars, can the minister inform the House whether the railways have yet come to an agreement on paying for maintenance of the first 2,000 cars the government purchased?

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, the agreement between the Canadian Wheat Board, which is trustee for the government for these cars, and the railways is a completed agreement and is available to members. When we announced the decision to order these additional 4,000 cars in accordance with the request from the Canadian Wheat Board and many other organizations like the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, we did so knowing exactly how many miles of track can handle 263,000 pound loaded hopper cars and knowing we would want to continue putting pressure on the railways to add more miles of trackage in that category by the time the hopper cars are available.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. A number of members are seeking supplementaries and we will be running short of time. Perhaps the Chair might recognize the hon. member for Assiniboia, the hon. member for Mackenzie, the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar and then try to go to the next question.

#### ACTION TO MAKE USE OF BOXCARS AT PRESENT INOPERATIVE ON BRANCH LINES

**Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia):** In view of the fact the minister, in announcing the 4,000 hopper cars, said there would be a closing of branch lines throughout western Canada, and at least 70 per cent of these lines are in Saskatchewan, and in view of the fact they involve in the neighbourhood of 1,000 elevator delivery points, can the minister inform the House what action the government is going to take to have the railways bring into operation all the boxcars which are now on those branch lines, some of which could be in operation with some effort on the part of the railways?

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, the announcement of the purchase of the hopper cars was not in any way related to any announcement about elevators being temporarily closed. Canadian National Railways did indicate that some of its branch lines would not be opened for a certain period of time because of the snow conditions. I think that may involve as many as 500 elevators. I certainly agree with the wisdom of the thought that you do not send more locomotives into snowbanks after cars when they are badly needed to move grain that is available on the main lines and get it to Vancouver where ships are waiting. That is the essence of the position at the moment. It is true you get a faster turnaround of rail equipment by using these main lines. Accordingly, the Canadian Wheat Board is giving additional delivery opportunities to all farmers whose elevators are temporarily closed so they can deliver their grain, road conditions permitting, to lines that are presently open.