

Oral Questions

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman speaks of misleading. I am not going to try to compete with him in that regard.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: I simply ask him this question. What justification is there to take out of the pockets of the western farmer, at a time when the farmer is having great difficulty to carry on, in many cases, more money to fund upgrading and expansion of the grain handling system? Is that not something that should fall on the people of Canada as a whole, and not on the western farmer?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, again I emphasize that any increase in charges will be an increase by the individual elevator companies including, for instance, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. The right hon. gentleman may make his representations to these companies if he thinks they should do with less money than they believe they need for the ongoing maintenance of the elevator system. These costs are designed to cover those very things which have always been covered by the charges of grain companies for grain handling facilities.

The right hon. gentleman made no different policy in that regard while he was prime minister. These things have always been part of the costs covered by the grain companies, and that is the situation today as well. The difference is that unlike the do-nothing approach during his regime, we are now buying hopper cars and rebuilding rail lines.

Mr. Paproski: Chippy!

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FISHERIES

CANADA—U.S. AGREEMENT

Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment. In view of the fact that no agreement was reached with the United States fisheries officials on Friday, the deadline given by the minister regarding the opening of the Washington coast to Canadian fishermen, will the minister follow through with his threat given in the House on May 8 that "if the American side does not live up to the agreement, the Canadian side would not be bound to it either?"

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the negotiators met on Friday; they exchanged messages during the weekend, and I met with our team just before coming into the House. The Canadian negotiators will be meeting with the committee of advisers involving fishermen and processors, etc., tomorrow and I will probably also meet with them. We are keeping this matter under constant review, but at the moment I am unable to make a definitive statement on this subject.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister how long he expects the Swiftsure Bank to be closed to

[Mr. Lang.]

Canadian fishermen. Will any compensation be forthcoming from the federal government to Canadian fishermen affected by the needless closure of this bank? I would point out that this bank is entirely within Canadian waters, and the United States demanded that it be closed to further fishing despite the fact that Canadian conservationists have stated that it need not be closed.

Mr. LeBlanc (Westmorland-Kent): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman, who is very familiar with these matters, will recognize that the problem of Swiftsure is mainly the interception of salmon either of American origin or heading for American rivers. Obviously, if the temporary agreement cannot be held together and if it cannot survive the present difficulties, then we will obviously reassess that closure.

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AIR TRANSPORT

SUBSIDIES TO EPA

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport: it follows on questions put last week by the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria and the hon. member for Cape Breton-The Sydneys. It concerns the future of Eastern Provincial Airways, the major regional air carrier in Atlantic Canada.

Can the minister tell the House whether he has under review the present subsidy arrangements which appear to be inappropriate and are causing Eastern Provincial Airways to sustain yearly losses and menacing its ability to service Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member will refer to the answers given to questions in the House, he will know that we have under consideration and discussion between Transport Canada and the several regional airlines the whole question of the various regional groups and the possibility of acquiring the Dash-7 aircraft and what the potential financial involvement of the government may be in any such solution. We are interested in providing good air service and in helping the regionals to give that service in some circumstances where they may find it difficult to do so on their own.

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's answer, but could he go a little further and give the House some assurance that he has under immediate review the question of subsidies, which topic he did not answer? Is he also giving consideration to changes in the routes which could be utilized, provided Eastern Provincial Airways were given equitable consideration for the purchase of Dash-7 aircraft, which is something I believe will be of benefit not only to de Havilland corporation but to Eastern Provincial Airways as well? Is he giving consideration to serving the Halifax-Bangor run, something which has been a matter of concern for some time in eastern Canada?