

Inquiries of the Ministry

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I will have to inquire about that, Mr. Speaker, but as far as I know, the Canadian government was not represented at a conference held in Banff last week.

[English]

GRAIN**BOX CAR DISTRIBUTION—EXTENSION OF CROP YEAR**

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In view of the statement by Mr. E. K. Turner of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool that a shortage of boxcars was holding up the flow of grain to space in the terminals at the Lakehead and Vancouver, can the minister report to the house on the action being taken to alleviate this condition?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): I think the best thing I could do to answer this question would be to read the message sent on this subject by the chief commissioner of the Wheat Board to the Minister of Agriculture in Saskatchewan. In his telegram the chief commissioner says:

Would advise that railways have been concentrating on provision of box cars to lowest quota points and will continue to do so until end of crop year . . . Would further advise that both railways currently have a very substantial number of cars under load to lakehead and Pacific coast and are spotting cars for additional loads each week to the full unload capacity of the terminals . . . With a heavy export movement out of Pacific coast for the next few weeks and a good volume of grain to be moved from the Lakehead east, we are still hopeful that adequate terminal space will be available to accommodate the five bushel quota and that this target will be reached by August 1.

Mr. Jack McIntosh (Swift Current-Maple Creek): Bearing in mind what the minister has just said about the situation at the terminals, will he tell the house whether he has given favourable consideration to the request to extend the present crop year until such time as a five bushel quota can be delivered? This question has been asked before, but I put it to the minister again because of the special circumstances prevailing in the current crop year. This is a matter for special consideration.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, you would say that the question is hypothetical.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Baldwin: So is the transport of a lot of the grain.

[Mr. Laprise.]

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Will the minister tell the house specifically what action is being taken by the Wheat Board or through his department to require the railways to provide sufficient cars to fill the space in the Saskatchewan Pool terminals at the Lakehead and in Vancouver? The minister's statement is in direct variance from that of the president of the Saskatchewan Pool. Is the minister misleading the house, or is his information not sufficiently up to date?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, my job is to impress the importance of these matters upon all concerned. We have questioned the railway companies and I am told—I am informed—that the position is as stated. As to the Wheat Board, we are in touch with them all the time. If the hon. member wants to deny that my information is right, it is up to him to do so, but to my knowledge a maximum effort is being made at the present time by all concerned.

Mr. A. B. Douglas (Assiniboia): May I ask whether the minister is still acting as co-ordinator and controller of the movement of grain in western Canada, as he indicated he was doing earlier this year?

Mr. Pepin: I am sorry; I was answering a comment I overheard from the hon. member for Crowfoot.

Mr. Horner: Important place, Crowfoot.

Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia): I will repeat my question, then. Is the minister still acting as co-ordinator and controller of the movement of grain in western Canada, as he indicated earlier?

Mr. Pepin: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I do that every day. I intend to be in Winnipeg on Monday next, performing this function.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dean Gundlock (Leithbridge): A supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. Is he being informed, or is he being told?

WHEAT—U.S. DISREGARD OF I.G.A. MINIMUM—WASHINGTON MEETING

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): In view of reports that the United States, following subsidized sales of French wheat, is considering suspending certain clauses of the International Grains Arrangement, or even disregarding the minimum price provisions of that agreement, can the Minister of Industry,