

Oral Questions

who trade with us, but not to the point of wrecking international trade.

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● (1130)

WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT

REPORT OF PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENTS

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It was reported in the western press that the Prime Minister earlier in the week stated to producers in western Canada that the Crow Bill was going to go through without changes. It was also reported that the Prime Minister indicated that it was not the best Bill that he could offer, and it was not economically viable. Would the Prime Minister be prepared to comment on that?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as stated, the question is against the rules of the House. I am not supposed to comment on things reported in the newspapers. But if the Hon. Member wants to hear my views on the Crow, I certainly did not indicate the Bill would go through without changes. On the contrary, the various representatives I met in the West were anxious to appear before the committee of this House and present various forms of amendment. I indicated they would be welcome, that I was expecting them. I was hoping that this or next week they could present their amendments. I am somewhat ashamed that the stalling tactics of both Opposition Parties have deprived those in the West who think that this Bill can be improved. Both Opposition Parties have deprived them of the opportunity of coming before the House and therefore shorten the time in which the Bill can be approved.

Mr. Shields: Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate that I am ashamed also that the Prime Minister of my country would go to western Canada and indicate that no changes would be made, or very little change, and that the Bill was going to go through—

Some Hon. Members: He did not say that.

Mr. Shields: —that it could not be done at the whim of western producers because they cannot produce Liberal votes.

Some Hon. Members: Question.

POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I thought that the Prime Minister was the Prime Minister of all Canadians, whether they be NDP, Liberal, or Socialist.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chrétien: Run, you're a socialist.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if that can be turned into a question, I suppose I am Prime Minister of all Canadians.

Mr. Kempling: Supposed to be? You are.

Mr. Trudeau: I hope that on my trip in the west I conveyed to those westerners whom I met that we are anxious to deal with Crow rate, the hundred year old problem in the West.

Mr. Deans: It was not a problem until you made it one.

Mr. Trudeau: Incidentally, it was reported in the press that I had said we have changed the Bill in order to placate our Members from Quebec. I had said exactly the contrary. I had said that the Members from Quebec do not need a change in the Crow.

An Hon. Member: Neither do westerners.

Mr. Trudeau: As far as Quebec is concerned, the Crow can stay for another hundred years, or two hundred years.

Some Hon. Members: Good.

Mr. Trudeau: Some Members are saying good, particularly the NDP Members, and the petitions they have. But I can assure this House, as I assured the West, that in so far as the Quebec Members are concerned we do not need a change in the Crow.

Mr. Deans: Don't change it then.

Mr. Trudeau: But we think that the people in the West themselves are agreed that the Crow should be changed, in ways that they cannot agree upon among themselves. They think that the Crow should be changed. It is because the Members from Quebec believe in policies for Canada, not only for Quebec, that they are prepared to support this Bill.

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FINANCE

SIZE OF GOVERNMENT'S DEFICIT

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, in the continuing absence of the Minister of Finance I will direct my question to the Minister of State for Finance. This week the Minister of Finance announced that the deficit for the last fiscal year ending March 31 was \$21.3 billion, double the deficit of the previous year, and subject to revision in August. This is the sixth estimate of the deficit by the Government in the last eleven months. August will be the seventh. Why is the Government so sloppy in the spending of money that it does not have? Why are these constant revisions necessary?

Mr. Lang: You still do not understand principles.

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member began her comments with the observation that the Minister of Finance was not here today. I