

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Tucker: May I say that I brought this matter to the attention of the Minister of Trade and Commerce hoping that he would deal with the whole question when he took it up with the wheat board, and I did not expect an immediate answer.

[Later:]

Mr. Argue: I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Trade and Commerce. When the minister is discussing with the wheat board the very important matter raised by the hon. member for Rosthern, will he consider discussing with the wheat board the possibility of establishing a domestic parity price for wheat as requested by the farm organizations of this country?

Mr. Churchill: Well, I thank the hon. member for his suggestion.

WHEAT—STATEMENT ON SALE TO INDIA

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the hon. member for Melville (Mr. Gardiner) asked for details of the arrangements made under the Colombo plan for the provision of \$7 million worth of Canadian wheat to India. This wheat in effect is being provided free alongside ship and, as in the past, the costs of shipping the wheat are to be borne by India. Depending upon decisions which are yet to be made by the Indian government as to how much No. 3 wheat they wish to take and how much No. 4, the \$7 million made available will provide between 4,200,000 bushels and 4,400,000 bushels. The Canadian wheat board, of course, is receiving the going price for such wheat out of existing Colombo plan funds.

Mr. H. R. Argue (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might ask the Prime Minister a supplementary question. Can the Prime Minister say whether a discussion was held with India as to whether that country might not accept a much larger quantity of wheat, in view of reports that India this year will be short of food to the extent of 2,000,000 tons, equivalent to 74 million bushels of wheat?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I might say that during the course of discussions between our representative there and the Indian government it was revealed that there is a very great shortage and a need of food grains. Demands for food are rising due to the progress of economic development, and at the same time some producing areas in India are expected to harvest less grain in

[Mr. Churchill.]

the near future than was anticipated. I believe consideration will be given to conducting further transactions with India to meet the present situation. At the moment, however, they are merely in a state of consideration, and I am unable to say any more than that.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, would the Prime Minister agree to make this an additional contribution in excess of the Colombo plan payments that we are obliged to make?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. friend will realize, until the present discussions have achieved a higher degree of fruition than is the case at present I would sooner not say anything more in that connection.

Mr. Alistair Stewart (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. I think it is obvious that we are all in favour of helping India in whatever way we can, but how on earth did you get the sale of the wheat mixed up with the Colombo plan? I thought they were two entirely different things. I understood the Colombo plan was for capital assistance.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I do not know who is mixed up, but I can say this. India is very willing to accept the grain in question as part of Canada's Colombo plan contribution, having regard to her economic position today.

ALLOCATION OF BOX CARS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. E. G. McCullough (Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Trade and Commerce. Has the minister's attention been drawn to the resolution passed at the annual meeting of the Manitoba pool elevators asking that the method of allocating box cars be changed to allow a farmer to deliver his grain to the elevator of his choice? If so, what action, if any, does the government contemplate taking?

Hon. Gordon Churchill (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I was always under the impression that questions of immediate urgency might be asked during the question period in the house, but we are getting many others. This is not a matter that has not been before the House of Commons in the past. It has been brought to my attention on several occasions during the last few months, and I realize the importance of the problem to the farmers concerned. This is a matter that has aroused a great deal of