

Not one single sale was lost. Not one single grain boat was dispatched to some other port.

We are fortunate in that there appears to be every chance of a settlement by the longshoremen's union and by the grain handlers' union. Work is progressing. The car unloads are getting close to a fairly normal level and, with goodwill and with some good luck, we can catch up with the backlog that occurred during the time this dispute was in effect.

ENERGY

PETRO-CANADA—PURCHASE OF PETROFINA CANADA INC.— CANADIAN OWNERSHIP CHARGE

Hon. G. I. Smith: Honourable senators, I should like to direct a question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate relating to the Canadian ownership charge which was imposed, as I understand the situation, to produce sufficient revenue to defray a high percentage of the cost of the purchase of Petrofina by Petro-Canada.

Is the Leader of the Government in a position to indicate to us how much money has been raised by that charge to date, and how near it is to reaching the objective for which it was imposed in relation to the purchase price of Petrofina?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I do not have the specific figures up to any given date, but I will try to get them, perhaps up to November 1 or any other particular date.

I believe it was projected that the pay-out for that purchase would be completed in about the latter part of the first quarter of 1983.

Senator Smith: On the same subject matter, is the leader able to assure us that this charge will not be extended to help defray the cost of the British Petroleum purchase?

Senator Olson: Yes, I can give that assurance, but I would remind my honourable friend of the announcement to the effect that, if the offer made by the chartered banks involved and the federal government with respect to Dome Petroleum were accepted, the charge would be applied long enough to take care of the federal government's commitment to that deal.

● (1440)

Senator Smith: My next question was going to be in connection with Dome Petroleum, and I think that the minister may have anticipated it. Just so that I may be clear whether he did or not, is he saying that the charge will be extended to cover the extent of the government's financial involvement in Dome Petroleum?

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, I was repeating an announcement that was made at the time. However, my honourable friend should be aware of the fact that what is now being considered by Dome and a number of other financial institutions involved is an offer that has not yet been accepted. Therefore, it is not known for certain that the Canadian ownership charge will be carried beyond the date I mentioned

[Senator Argue.]

with respect to Petrofina for the purpose of the Dome situation.

Senator Smith: Perhaps a further supplementary question would be permissible. In view of the Leader of the Government's answer, can he give an estimate as to when the situation will have gelled, if I may use such a word, as to the acceptance or otherwise of the proposal or offer?

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, I do not believe that I can answer that question today as precisely as I am accustomed to doing. I am not sure, quite frankly, how long the offer is to be outstanding, or, indeed, if there is a termination date on it.

Senator Smith: Perhaps the Leader of the Government would not mind ascertaining what he can about the matter and informing the Senate in due course?

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, I would be glad to do that.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): You are really improving!

CANADA POST CORPORATION

DEFINITION OF "LETTER"

Hon. H. A. Olson (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I want to comply with the request that was made by Senator Roblin yesterday, which was to bring back as complete an answer as I could tomorrow—that is today—and here it is.

On July 20, Senator Roblin asked for the contents of the representations sent to the minister and the corporation regarding the definition of a letter. Disclosure of this information would have been improper at that time, as it would be now.

A letter between two individuals, whether it be a minister of the Crown or not, is privileged material. It would be inappropriate to have the recipient or a third party, Canada Post Corporation, release the contents. Many of those who submitted briefs made the contents available to the press at the time and subsequently. I am told that Senator Roblin was advised of this at the time.

When Parliament passed the Canada Post Corporation Act, it unanimously agreed to the principle of a national postal service. Indeed, it agreed that the corporation should forthwith bring forward a definition of a letter to circumscribe its monopoly, or, legally speaking, its "exclusive privilege." This is necessary to ensure a revenue base with which to support the national service.

At the same time, Parliament created in the act a unique process that would allow for the protection of the public interest when the corporation sought to make any major changes. This process involves the publication of a proposed regulation, public comment and discussion and consultation, amendment by the corporation and submission of the amended