

Olympic Boycott

Mr. MacGuigan: As one of the hon. members is shouting, that decision initially was made by the previous government, and we have been prepared to continue it. The arrangement and understanding with other countries is that we will continue only our traditional level of supply and that we will not seek to make up any shortfall which the Soviet Union may have. The fall in price is certainly not a direct result of the policies of the Canadian government, although it may arguably result from the over-all embargo situation in which we participated. That is a question we will have to discuss with the other countries which are involved in it. It is not one on which we could have a policy ourselves.

Mr. Nystrom: I wonder if the minister can offer farmers anything more concrete in terms of compensation. He implied that he might take some initiative in discussing with other countries what may be done because of the falling price, but is there anything else the minister can say at this time as to whether or not there is any compensation for the farmers other than the western grain stabilization plan which is not adequate in this case?

Mr. MacGuigan: In general we have taken the position, if there is a cutting back in our sales to the Soviet Union, that this would be an appropriate situation for compensation to the farmers. But that has not occurred. We have contracts now and we are in the process of shipping more than we have in many years, less than we have in peak years, but certainly a representative amount. The hon. member may at some future time wish to return to this subject if it becomes apparent that we are dropping below where we usually are in our exports.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Madam Speaker, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) spoke of the comparative values in prestige terms of the medals which are to be won at the Olympic Games in Moscow this year by those who will be participating and those medals which will be won at other games. I was wondering whether the Secretary of State for External Affairs can say what arrangements have been made or what exploratory talks have taken place between Canada and the possible sites for those games, either dispersed sites or concentrated ones in Canada or abroad, where these other games with more prestigious medals will be held?

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, I think it is worth drawing to the attention of the House that the initiative, perhaps led by the United States, to organize a complete series of alternate games or an international sports festival, as I think it was euphemistically called at the Geneva meeting which we attended as observers, is not really going well, for a combination of reasons. There does not seem to be great international favour even among the countries which are boycotting, their Olympic committees and their athletes, in organizing a series of events in the world which, in total, would amount to something like an alternate games.

● (1750)

What we have in mind, if that attempt does not succeed, and we certainly will participate in any such attempt by countries which are deciding to boycott, is that my colleague, the minister, plans immediately to approach the Canadian sports organizations to see if we can upgrade some of our events so that at least our athletes will have an opportunity of better competition. I might add that the best prediction I have heard is that if the boycott, as we are now convinced, will be effective, something like 80 per cent of the medal athletes from the non-communist world will not be participating. That will certainly make the intrinsic value of the medals in Moscow to those who win them very small, indeed.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Madam Speaker, I was wondering whether the Secretary of State for External Affairs could say whether there have been any conversations with possible organizers of sites in Canada which could entertain athletes from around the world, and Canadian athletes, for these games?

Mr. MacGuigan: I cannot answer that with complete assurance, Madam Speaker, because I am not sure that there have not been some informal consultations. But, after my colleague, the minister for sport and I were discouraged by the Canadian Olympic committee from considering such an idea, at least before we had made a decision as to the Olympic Games themselves, we have not carried out a systematic attempt to deal with these sites. As I say, my colleague, the minister responsible for sport, has the intention of immediately going into this very question.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) a question. Several months ago when Canada had an effective government, before February 18, when it had a government that had some conviction and some muscle, and this policy was put into effect, it was decided there was no need to interfere with a situation where Soviet fishing vessels were coming into St. John's, Newfoundland, to be repaired at the CN drydock at St. John's, Newfoundland. That is a drydock which is now ready for a Syncrolift, by the way, and I am hoping that the Minister of Industry Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray) is going to do his thing and see to the financing of it now, and that the tenders should be called shortly to expand the Syncrolift. In the meantime, there are 18 or 20 Soviet trawlers per year being repaired there, giving considerable business to the port of St. John's and the people who work at that dock there. Is it still the government's position that it would not be of any benefit to Canada and it would not add to any effectiveness of the boycott or otherwise, and that arrangement can continue?

Mr. MacGuigan: Unless the hon. member wants to make a submission to the contrary, Madam Speaker, it is our present intention to allow Soviet fishing vessels to continue to come into Canadian ports to receive supplies. We have, as I believe the previous government did as well, denied permission to