

[Translation]

**Mr. Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Would it be right to say that the public servants in our regional offices are not aware of the existence of that program, as they have stated themselves, and that they do not think they will be able to help those trainees who have already been accepted in small businesses?

[English]

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the minister announced the program just this past week. I am surprised that has not filtered down to individuals at the level of responsibility for administering it. Most assuredly they are working on the employment tax credit program. This is going well now and there is an opportunity here for the small businessman, in addition to the announcements that my colleague made, to work in that particular arena. There are many opportunities for people who want to become new members of the work force or to take training under the new programs or the old ones under the Adult Occupational Training Act.

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## TRANSPORT

### INCREASE IN GRAIN ELEVATOR CHARGES

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport and concerns the recent announcement by the Canadian Grain Commission of increases in maximum service charges allowed for the grain industry. These changes could generate millions of dollars in new revenue for the grain companies, according to a report in the *Western Producer* of May 11, 1978. The article states that under the provisions, the companies may now levy against producers who deliver to country elevators, 9 per cent. It goes on to say:

Maximum elevation charges at terminal elevators will increase by close to 80 per cent and companies will be able to increase drying charges by 10 per cent.

I would ask the minister, what stand did the government take when the commission sat, relative to this matter? According to the same article in the *Western Producer*, the reason for the increase was that the grain companies needed higher revenues to fund upgrading and expansion of the grain handling system. Would the minister tell the House how much it is estimated will be taken from the farmer during the coming year by reason of these increases? That is the first question.

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I should make it clear to the right hon. gentleman that the Grain Commission is the primary responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture although, of course, my interest in it lies in the fact that the Wheat Board and grain farmers are very much affected by any such decision.

● (1432)

The Grain Commission made its decision after hearing representations in public forum from the grain companies

### Oral Questions

about their increased costs and their future financial problems, as well as hearing from others representing farmers and farm organizations. It is important to note that these are maximum rates and that, in fact, the elevator companies have not been charging the maximum in recent time. The question of whether they will now is one involving their relative needs and perhaps the possibility of real competition among the elevator companies in order to keep the rates as low as possible. That is a good thing for the Grain Commission. On the other hand, the elevator companies, including the pools and others, will have to look at their over-all needs and costs to determine what their charges should be.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, I would need a microscope to understand that answer.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** These increases will run into many millions of dollars which will come out of the pockets of western farmers in particular who produce wheat. In view of the fact that the reason for the increases is, as already stated, that the companies are allowed to make these maximum charges so that they may be able to upgrade and expand the grain handling system, why should expenditures such as that for the benefit of all of Canada come out of the hide of the western farmers?

Will the minister recommend a suspension for the coming year? In addition, will he give the assurance that expenditures such as those for which this increase is required will come out of the pockets of all Canadians, and not out of the pockets of the western farmer who too often to the hon. gentleman is a forgotten man?

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman refers to these as increases. Again I emphasize, as I did in my earlier answer, that they are increases in the maximums which the elevator companies may charge. The question of what it will cost the farmer really depends on what the individual elevator companies, including the pools and others, decide is required for their own elevator operations, including their elevator construction. That is a simple answer.

It is clear that the costs of upgrading the system, referred to by the right hon. gentleman, are the costs of building new and additional elevators, part of the ongoing elevator system which traditionally, under his regime, as at all times, have been part of the ongoing costs of operating the elevator system. I hope the right hon. gentleman is not trying to mislead the public into thinking that in any way any of these moneys cover the very important injections of cash by the Government of Canada into the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the rail system. That is totally falling upon the Government of Canada, the people of Canada and the taxpayer, and in no way is part of any of these cost increases. I hope he also would agree that this rebuilding program for rail lines is a most important advance and an important contribution by the people of Canada.