

Senator Murray: The Conservative government took its position and explained it, with the results that I think we are all aware of—in western Canada at any rate—in the last election. What I am trying to get from the minister is some information about the policy of the government. What he has just suggested is that what is normal and traditional as a level of sales is what the Soviet Union indicates it is willing to buy from us. If that is the case, what the minister is telling us is that the embargo no longer exists.

Senator Argue: I shall not comment on the honourable senator's contention that the embargo no longer exists. The honourable senator says that if we sell 5 million tonnes it means that we are into that market as hard as we can go. I would say this: As I understand the policy of the government, we are not endeavouring to supplant the American sales into that market, and we are not looking to go from 5 million tonnes to 10 million tonnes, or to some astronomical level; but we are endeavouring, in our own way, to protect what we believe are the legitimate interests of Canada, and of prairie producers, in that market, and that certainly does not mean staying at 3.8 million tonnes. Indeed, we moved away from that policy as long ago as mid-July.

Senator Murray: I will not ask the minister to define an "astronomical level", since I have failed to get him to define with any precision what is a normal and traditional level. What the minister has really said is that a normal and traditional level is whatever the Soviet Union indicates it is willing to buy from us.

Let me leave that on the record for the moment, and perhaps we can come back to it another day when we have some more information, because I would like to have the report, through the Leader of the Government, from his colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs. As I say, it is that honourable gentleman who has to explain these things for Canada in the international community.

Senator Perrault: Because of the expertise of the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board, the Honourable the Secretary of State for External Affairs listens carefully to his views.

Senator Murray: I am extremely interested to hear that. Perhaps some questions could be asked of the Secretary of State for External Affairs in the other place about that matter. I will leave it for the moment.

However, I want to ask the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board, as one who follows world grain markets and is interested in these matters—without entering into a discussion of the appropriateness or otherwise of grain embargoes as a policy recourse in international affairs, since that decision was made when the embargo was imposed—what his perception is of the effect of the grains embargo on the Soviet Union and its allies. For example, what can the minister tell us about the reported slaughter of livestock in the Soviet Union and the extent to which the grain embargo, together with the poor crop year in that country, may have been partly responsible; and, secondly, about whether the grains embargo

to the Soviet Union has affected that country's ability to export grains to its allies in Europe—Poland, for example—and in Asia—Laos and Vietnam, for example?

Senator Argue: I have now quite a few questions to answer. Earlier Senator Murray said something like this: Is it the Canadian policy, when there is a demand in the Soviet Union for a large supply of grain, that we supply it? It takes two things. First, it takes a large demand, if there is going to be a large sale, and it takes a large supply. So there is—

Senator Murray: And the transport system to get it there.

Senator Argue: Our transport system is very capable. Last year—

Senator Murray: It has a terrible reputation under your government.

Some Hon. Senators: Shame.

Senator Argue:—we transported and exported the largest quantity of grain in history.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Perrault: Because of our minister too.

Senator Argue: The Tory government was not there all year. The honourable senator may have wished it was there, and it was his own party's fault that it wasn't there. Imagine losing a vote after you were in government. Imagine Mackenzie King being in office and letting the division bells cease ringing when he was not able to carry the vote. He would have had them ringing for 48 hours and thus saved his government. But they never thought of that. You see, that cabinet did not want anybody with experience. They said, "Well, if you were a John Diefenbaker cabinet minister, there is no place for you in the Clark government." But if they had taken in a few of those old-timers—

Senator Macdonald: On a point of order, I wonder if the minister would answer the question rather than vilifying the former government.

Senator Argue: It may be a point of order, but we get these little needles that do not really have any substance to them. However, there is a little substance to my reply, because it is accurate.

Senator Frith: I hope it is perfectly clear that we on this side do not complain in any way about the result.

Senator Argue: I am not complaining; I am enjoying it. I get an opportunity to talk a little longer.

Senator Perrault: Carry on.

Senator Argue: From what I have read, I think it is correct to say that the partial embargo—and it was only that—on the export of grains to the Soviet Union did have some adverse effect on the maintenance of their livestock. I believe there were increased sales, so that initially it probably increased their marketing of livestock; but the immediate effect was to reduce their production, their breeding herds, and so on.