

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Gleave: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I can understand the preference of the Wheat Board. However in view of the urgency of the situation which has arisen over the last several months, would the minister be good enough to reconsider this decision in the light of these circumstances?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, in view of the urgency of the situation it might be wiser to let the Wheat Board do their job in the west.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pepin: What I am trying to say in the most polite way I can is that there are two ways of looking at the possibility of the Wheat Board officials coming to testify before a committee of the house. At the present time the Wheat Board is very busy trying to solve the glut situation which exists in Vancouver. It is also trying to maximize Canadian exports. Therefore, on balance I thought it might be wiser to ask the committee to hear the Wheat Board officials in March.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the minister's statement with reference to the Wheat Board not appearing before the committee at this time, and in view of the fact that some eight or nine ships, on which the Wheat Board will be paying demurrage, are waiting to be loaded, will the minister take administrative action at his level to see that dry grain gets into these ships and to export markets before the farmers of this country starve to death?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has the advantage of possessing a clear, simple mind. When one looks at this situation in depth and with objectivity one realizes that it is unfortunately more complicated than the hon. member would like it to be. The complication, in very simple words, is that we have here a conflict between two advantages. I can remember the hon. member asking me to see to it that damp grain would be shipped to terminal elevators as rapidly as possible. That was done, and the result is that we now have a glut. We are at the same time faced with a situation where dry grain is required for exports that could not be anticipated, such as added exports to Japan. These could not be anticipated to be at their present level. So priority is being given now to shipment of dry grain to Vancouver in order to remedy the present situation of waiting ships.

[Mr. Pepin.]

REQUEST FOR FINAL PAYMENT

Mr. George Muir (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary and is addressed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In view of the tight money situation prevailing on the prairies, due to the lack of grain sales, would he consider discussing with the Wheat Board the desirability of making the final payment on the previous crop year's grain pool at the earliest possible opportunity?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I try to speak to the Wheat Board as often as I can and I will bring this additional subject into my conversations with them.

Mr. Muir (Lisgar): A further supplementary question. Would the minister report to the house as soon as possible on his discussion with the Wheat Board?

REQUEST FOR GREATER DELIVERY OF DAMP GRAIN

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I am going to direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, but I should like to inform him that there are boxcars sitting on the sidings at the moment filled with dry grain.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would the hon. member ask a question.

Mr. Korchinski: I should like to ask the minister whether he would undertake to get some sort of indication from the Wheat Board, and report to the house, whether the farmers can expect to deliver at least the three bushel quota of damp grain that was authorized by the Wheat Board; and whether the Wheat Board expects a further movement of damp grain might be made, possibly before the spring weather.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, the answer was given by the chairman of the Wheat Board yesterday in his press conference, as follows:

We have also had a policy in effect which allows producers advance delivery privileges on damp grain to the three bushel quota level. It is still our objective to try to equalize at a six bushel level but in view of the large quantity of damp grain now in the marketing pipeline, it will be impossible to give any further advance delivery privileges beyond the three bushel quota level for damp grain.

Mr. Korchinski: A further supplementary question. May I ask the minister whether he