

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

**Mr. Stanfield:** In view of the minister's answer, could he indicate very briefly the scope of the inquiries being conducted, and could he also indicate when the House will be informed as to the outcome of these inquiries?

**Mr. Lang:** No, Mr. Speaker, I do not think anything would be gained by attempting to describe the internal workings of an inquiry of this general nature. Needless to say, when proceedings are begun it becomes a matter of record and therefore known to the public. It is not usual for the minister to indicate to the House when proceedings have been instituted. I did not do so in this case and I am not likely to do so in any future case, but it becomes a matter of public record at that stage.

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• (1420)

**GRAIN**

**PURCHASE OF HOPPER CARS BY GOVERNMENT—  
RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEPRECIATION, MAINTENANCE  
AND REPAIR COSTS—PAYMENT FOR USE**

**Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the minister in charge of the Wheat Board or the Prime Minister. In view of the statement of the Prime Minister in Winnipeg that it is the intention of the government to purchase 2,000 hopper cars involving an expenditure of \$42 million, and in light of the fact the Prime Minister also stated that the Canadian Wheat Board will purchase and operate these cars, can the minister inform the House whether the Wheat Board will be responsible in future years for the depreciation, maintenance and repair costs of this rolling stock?

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice):** No, Mr. Speaker. The Wheat Board itself will not ultimately be responsible for any part of the purchase and therefore any part of the depreciation costs but will, rather, be reimbursed for this by the government. The Canadian Wheat Board will be the titular owner of the hopper cars, but the actual operation of the hopper cars will, of course, be organized by the railways which will have to provide the appropriate locomotive power to haul the cars from grain elevators to grain terminals. The additional 2,000 cars are designed to allow us to achieve even higher export records than we have achieved at the present time.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Gleave:** Since this is a new departure in transportation policy and since the railways are required to transport grain for export within the Crowsnest Pass rates as the maximum charge, can the minister tell the House whether the railways will be required to pay for the use of these cars in the form of a lease or rental agreement or in any other manner? Are they going to be required to pay for the use of this rolling stock?

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, the exact relationship between the railways, the Wheat Board and the government in connection with costs involved in hauling this extra movement of grain remains to be settled finally in future discussions. I should say, however, that there was a clear

[Mr. Lang.]

difficulty in persuading the variety of parties, whether the elevator companies or the railways, to take the necessary steps to ensure that we could get the movement of say 900 million bushels of grain, with each saying that with changes on the part of the other the necessary grain could be handled. It was our desire to see that the grain was in fact handled without waiting to see whether that argument could be settled. In other words, we wanted to be sure the grain would be moved without trying to rely on the fact that difficulties between the parties would be an adequate excuse to explain why it was not.

**Mr. Gleave:** Does the minister wish to leave the impression with the House that the railways were unready to transport the grain and, indeed—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I wonder whether that might not be debate. For the moment the Chair will recognize the hon. member for Marquette on a supplementary. We might return to the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar if he has a further supplementary.

**GOVERNMENT PLANS TO INCREASE PRICES**

**Mr. Craig Stewart (Marquette):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary arises out of the Prime Minister's statement in Winnipeg that the federal government will assist in purchasing 2,000 railway hopper cars to move grain. I should like to ask the minister responsible for the Wheat Board if he can tell the House whether the government has any effective plans to alleviate the most pressing problem facing western farmers, that is, the low price at which the government is selling grain?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. That question, I would think, is not quite in order. The hon. member is inviting the minister to make a statement of policy which normally ought to be made on motions. The hon. member might like to rephrase the question or ask a supplementary to that previously asked by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar.

**Mr. Stewart (Marquette):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister advise the House as to what plans the government has to alleviate the low price of grain that is causing western farmers difficulty at the present time?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member's second question resembles the first. I suggest to the hon. member and to the minister that the question invites general statement which ought to be made on motions. However, the minister might reply briefly to the question, and I will then recognize the hon. member for Regina East on a supplementary.

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, needless to say, the grain which is being sold is being sold in international markets at the best possible price which can be obtained for it. Such programs as two-price wheat and the willingness to purchase 2,000 hopper cars are clear additions to the income cause of the farmers.

**Mr. Stewart (Marquette):** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.