

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. McDermid:** What have you got in the pail, George?

**Mr. Baker:** —that they do not know what they are going to do.

The Government had to pay some farmers in some provinces this past summer to plough potatoes under. In light of that I would like to ask the Prime Minister, or perhaps the Minister of Transport who is more responsible for it, to explain to the Canadian people why on government jets used by cabinet Ministers and the Prime Minister, on Air Canada, a Crown corporation, and on VIA Rail, another Crown corporation as of four months ago, the potatoes used do not come from western Canada or eastern Canada? They are imported from Belgium, and that is not small potatoes to Canadian farmers.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Chair is always reluctant to interrupt the Hon. Member.

**Some Hon. Members:** Why?

**Mr. Speaker:** The Chair could not help but observe there seemed to be some prop to the question on the Hon. Member's desk. I know the Hon. Member, when he asks his supplementary as I know he will, will want to stay within the rules.

**Mr. Gauthier:** Table the potatoes!

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, naturally a baker would be concerned about the potato.

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

**Mr. Crosbie:** With reference to the Canada-France dispute, I remember the hon. gentleman was concerned about French fries. Now it is the Belgian potato and the question is just as half-baked.

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

**Mr. Crosbie:** Luckily I am knowledgeable on the subject. I learned that VIA Rail, under our predecessor Liberal Government, used rice.

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

**Mr. Crosbie:** We at least have moved them on to the potato.

With respect to Air Canada, I am advised that it used 148,000 kilos of Canadian potatoes and 16,000 kilos from Belgium last year. The Belgian potatoes are processed. That is, they are mashed and processed into balls. The hon. gentleman I am sure will be interested in that important piece of information.

With respect to government aircraft, I am advised they purchase locally and take their spuds as they find them.

## REQUEST THAT MINISTER CONDUCT INVESTIGATION

**Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate):** Mr. Speaker, getting back to my supplementary question directed to our half-baked Minister of Transport who will soon be known as

Mr. Potatohead, and perhaps Bud the Belgian Spud in P.E.I., the price of potatoes to western Canadian farmers is roughly four cents to five cents a pound. To eastern Canadian farmers in our four Atlantic provinces it is just about three cents a pound. These potatoes imported from Belgium are a dollar a pound—five dollars for that small tin I once had on my desk.

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

**Mr. Baker:** Will the Minister of Transport investigate this waste of money by Crown corporations, admit now that the Canadian potato is the best in the world—

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

**Mr. Baker:** —and no airline or railway in this country should be allowed to use potatoes from anywhere but Canada? If they do not like the size of the potatoes they can slice them, mash them, or scallop them. You can do more things than just peel a potato!

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is a real “pomme de terrorist”, if not a “mashochist”.

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

**Mr. Crosbie:** I certainly intend to advise Mr. Jeannot and Mr. Hanigan, and anyone else who might be concerned about this important issue, that we want them to purchase Canadian potatoes. I believe some of the problem is in packaging and getting the right quantities. However, if they can find them the size of the Hon. Member's head, I am sure they will be more than willing.

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[Translation]

## RAILWAYS

SITUATION AT CHARNY, EASTERN QUEBEC, AND ABITIBI—  
GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same Minister and concerns the crisis situation in the railway transportation industry in Quebec, and specifically in eastern Quebec, in the Abitibi region and at the Charny yard.

In view of the massive cut-backs at Charny, and the possibility that railway tracks in eastern Quebec and Abitibi will be abandoned, what is the Minister going to do to save the jobs at Charny and maintain the railway tracks in eastern Quebec and Abitibi? What is he going to do?