

GRAIN

WHEAT—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON NEGOTIATIONS FOR
INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the minister responsible for the Wheat Board. The exporting and importing nations are now apparently at loggerheads on the proposal for a new international wheat agreement. Since Canada is one of the major exporting nations at the London talks, what position have we taken there? Is the minister optimistic that discussions will resume in December in London?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the discussions are continuing. I, personally, would not use the word loggerheads to describe the differences which exist in discussions at this stage. Indeed, differences may be as much between exporting countries one with another, as between exporters and importers. The discussions are dealing with the technical questions, about price ranges and possible reserve stocks which may be written into an international grains agreement. Our position in Canada is that appropriate reserve conditions have to be written in so that the reserve is really a reserve out of the market, not overhanging it and causing lower prices for producers so that they do not get a fair return. I am still optimistic that the discussions can lead to a basis for negotiations and at some point between the beginning of the year and Easter those negotiations may take place.

Mr. Murta: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since the negotiations concern maximum and minimum prices as well as assured supply, would the minister assure the House that there will not be a policy set of firm maximum prices at the negotiations in London? If this were the case it would certainly be detrimental to the long-term interests of western Canadian grain producers.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the position that some nations are taking that there should be firm minimums and maximums is one which I find not as workable, frankly, as the position put forward particularly by the United States that there be a target area of price, rather than a minimum and maximum and that the reserves be used as ways of holding the price at the bottom and at the upper levels. I think those nations seeking more firmness at those levels can accomplish that by arguing for a larger reserve aside from the regular stocks in our ordinary commercial channels. That is the position that I will be putting forward.

* * *

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

FRANCE—ALLEGED LACK OF DESIRE TO FURTHER PEACE BID BY
EGYPT—POSSIBILITY OF PROTEST

Mr. Ralph Stewart (Cochrane): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of a report in the London *Times* which asserts

Oral Questions

that France has blocked an EEC desire to applaud the exemplary initiative taken by President Sadat to establish a lasting peace in the Middle East and the obvious willingness of Israel to co-operate, is it the intention of this government to express its concern over the unwillingness of France to further these peace advances in the Middle East?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker. It would not be my intention to indicate to the French government or authorities anything relating to their internal decision making.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: They might give you a medal.

Mr. Jamieson: I would hope they would show the same regard for our internal decision-making.

* * *

[Translation]

EXCISE TAX

REIMBURSEMENT OF TAX ON GASOLINE—ELIMINATION OF
DELAYS

Mr. Gilles Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. In view of the problems associated with the reimbursement of the excise tax on gas, and because the delays are due to the centralization of payments in an Ottawa computer centre, could the minister take the necessary steps to accelerate these payments and reduce the delays in reimbursement which sometimes may take two, two and a half and even three months?

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I am having discussions with departmental officials concerning this. I shall advise the hon. member of the outcome as soon as possible.

* * *

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

UPPER VOLTA—LOAN TO IMPROVE RAILWAY—POSSIBILITY OF
SYDNEY STEEL CORPORATION SUPPLYING RAILS

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs regarding the recent grant of \$40 million under CIDA to Upper Volta which among other things according to press reports, included \$14 million for improving the national railway in that country. Can the minister advise the House what opportunities Canadian steel companies will have to provide rails for this project with particular reference to the Sydney Steel Corporation which as the minister knows is undergoing some rather difficult times?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in this case as well as a number of