

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I feel the present arrangement with the present Minister is the ideal arrangement. If we had a full Ministry it would cause problems in the machinery of government, because obviously people who belong to multicultural groups come under different Departments and they can be served by different Departments. There is a specific interest in multiculturalism which is best discharged, in our view, by having a Minister of State for Multiculturalism.

Mr. Lewycky: Madam Speaker, I am a bit disappointed in the response of the Prime Minister because it seems to indicate a kind of backtracking from the commitment that he made in 1971 with his policy statement to the House.

BUDGET OF DIRECTORATE

Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River): My supplementary question is addressed to the Minister of State for Multiculturalism. The Government's budget for 1983-84 works out to something like sixty-six cents—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member must ask a question. His preambles are much too long.

Mr. Lewycky: Madam Speaker, going directly to the question, could the Minister indicate what type of pressure he is exerting on other members of Cabinet to see that multiculturalism in Canada is more of a way of life rather than a mere Government policy to which they only devote 66 cents per capita for the population of Canada?

Hon. D. M. Collenette (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Madam Speaker, first, the Government has increased the budget of the multiculturalism directorate, in fact, has doubled it, for the period of the last year and the next four years. Therefore I think that is quite a commitment. It would take too long here to catalogue all the various programs that have been put in place by the Government of Canada to enhance the multicultural dynamic of the country. I would be glad to give the Hon. Member information at a later date.

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GRAIN

WESTERN GRAIN STABILIZATION PROGRAM

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. It follows on the heels of his answer of yesterday when he said, "We do not expect a payout with respect to the western grain stabilization plan". Does the Minister find any fault with the present administration or regulation of the plan? Specifically, is he trying to cause a greater sensitivity of the plan toward economic conditions that currently exist, and the needs of individual farmers?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, as I pointed out in my answer yesterday, the grain stabilization payment is regulated by the legislation. It must be adjusted over a five-year average. That is very clearly part of the rules which the Hon. Member, himself, admitted in his earlier statement would have to be amended by the House. As I pointed out, according to the formula that is not a matter of policy but a matter of requirement, the average this year, or so it appears, will be above the five-year average.

I did indicate that that matter would be under review at the end of October, which is the normal time. If the Hon. Member has any specific complaint or judgment about the administration, I would be glad to receive it on behalf of the Minister of State responsible for the Wheat Board.

FIVE-YEAR AVERAGING PRINCIPLE

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Madam Speaker, I think the Minister has touched on the very point that I wished to ask him about. We in this House are all aware that we are bound by the legislation and a five-year average. I want to put the question to him again, though. Does he find any fault with the concept of the five-year average, bearing in mind the fact that a 10 per cent inflation rate for five years would in fact yield a 50 per cent misrepresentation from payments for the farmers? Therefore, can I have the Minister's view as to whether or not he finds that five-year averaging at fault, and is he agreeable to accepting an amendment that would shorten that period of time?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I would be very pleased to have more detailed representations from the Hon. Member concerning any changes that he would want to see. I think it is a matter that would have to be more carefully assessed than one is given time to do during Question Period.

INCREASE IN PREMIUMS—REQUEST FOR CHANGE IN PAYOUT FORMULA

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Transport. If, in his view and that of most producers, the formula that establishes the payout is at fault, considering that the payment for the insurance program started at \$500 per year, was raised \$900 per year, and is now at \$1,200 per year, if the premiums can be changed would the Minister agree that he could change the formula to reflect the realities of 1983, and trigger a payout at this time?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I think we are all aware of the changing conditions in the grain market. It is for that reason that a review is being undertaken of the operation and application of the grain stabilization program. But I do not think one can pick out one ingredient and isolate it as being a cause or a factor. I think it must be reviewed over all. That review is under way and should be completed very soon. As I said, if Hon. Members of