

*Oral Questions*

whether the government is prepared to reimburse the Canadian Wheat Board for such demurrage charges incurred through no fault of the board or of the western grain producers?

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, the question of when demurrage charges are payable depends on a number of circumstances. We do not ordinarily attempt to step in and offset a specific problem in this regard in this industry or any other, and it would be a serious question of principle for us to do so.

EMERGENCY ACTION BY RAILWAYS TO OVERCOME BACKLOG  
IN MOVEMENT OF GRAIN

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Transport further to that asked by the hon. member for Vegreville. In view of the fact that some \$600 million in grain exports are in jeopardy and that the railways are 11,000 carloads behind at Vancouver and 7,000 behind at Thunder Bay, can the minister say whether the railways are now taking or have they informed him of any emergency priority action they will be taking in an effort to catch up on this backlog?

**Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, a new idea proposed at the conference I attended yesterday was—it was suggested, I think, by the right hon. member for Prince Albert the other day—to have somebody who is going to supervise all this and see whether the best use is being made of the cars. I propose to suggest to cabinet that we implement as soon as possible some kind of monitoring system so that we are sure that all cars are used to the fullest extent at this moment.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre for a further supplementary, after which the Chair will complete the first round of questioning by recognizing the hon. member for Champlain and then return for supplementaries to the right hon. member for Prince Albert and the hon. member for Assiniboia.

SHORTAGE OF BOXCARS TO MOVE GRAIN—SUGGESTED  
PLACING OF ENTIRE RAILWAY SYSTEM UNDER PUBLIC  
OWNERSHIP

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. In view of the recurring situation in our transportation system, in view of the statement made by the Minister of Transport last Thursday in which he said that the principle of competition in the National Transportation Act is wrong in Canada and that the government does not have a real transportation policy, to use the minister's words, and in view of the present emergency situation, will the Prime Minister advise whether the government will now adopt and announce a policy of taking the entire national railway system in Canada under public ownership and control—

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

[Mr. Benjamin.]

**Mr. Benjamin:**—so that the principle of the provision of adequate railway services will be the first priority rather than competition and profit?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, this seems to be an interesting proposition. Perhaps the hon. member could give me details of his suggestion. Would it include, beyond the railways, the bus systems and other forms of local transportation or would it only apply to the railways? If the hon. member can work it out, perhaps he might want to write to me about it.

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● (1440)

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

POSSIBLE BEEF SHORTAGE—ACTION BY GOVERNMENT

**Mr. René Matte (Champlain):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the Minister of Agriculture.

Since Canadian breeders seem to reject a request by the federal government inviting them to increase their herds of cattle so as to prevent beef shortage and too high an increase in the price of this product, what other measure does the government intend to take to prevent such a ridiculous and stupid eventuality in a country like Canada which has such an enormous potential and cannot enable its citizens to get some good food at a reasonable cost?

[English]

**Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to make sure that the people of Canada have food at reasonable prices and that producers get reasonable prices for their input. We are working on a program that I hope is long-term and also on one that will be short-term to make sure that these people do not have to sell their herds.

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TRANSPORT

SHORTAGE OF BOXCARS TO MOVE GRAIN—REQUEST FOR  
APPOINTMENT OF CONTROLLER WITH POWER TO DIRECT  
ALLOCATION BY RAILWAYS

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport was kind enough a few moments ago to refer to a suggestion I had made. For several months I have endeavoured to get the government to bring in legislation to provide for a boxcar controller—I know the House would pass it very quickly—with power to direct the railway companies to make a proper allocation of cars not only for wheat but for all other commodities. Would the minister now do so? The situation is desperate on the prairies and all over the world we are losing contracts because of failure to live up to contractual agreements. I make this appeal to him because I know he wants to do something and he has the knowledge and the power to do it. Will he do it?