

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD**

GRAIN EXPORTS THROUGH PORT OF CHURCHILL

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds. He is certainly aware that as of today, August 18, the Port of Churchill, which is a very valuable part of the grain shipping system of Canada, has yet to receive any allocation of shipments. Today we had an announcement by the Wheat Board that it will now be rationing exports of grain.

Considering that that rationing program should take into account the traditional 3 per cent of movement through the Port of Churchill, is the Minister prepared to ensure that that kind of fair sharing will be given to the Port of Churchill so that the facilities will continue to be used and its future will not be put in jeopardy by the lack of any shipments at all this year?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the so-called rationing of grain, we face the prospect in Canada this year of having as much as 40 per cent or even more lower than the previous crop year, which means that the Board is not going to be out looking for new customers as it might be with larger exports.

When it comes to the Port of Churchill, Churchill is an important port. It is one of four export spouts out of the country. To date the Canadian Wheat Board has not been able to line up a customer to take grain from Churchill within the Wheat Board's mandate.

I should remind the Hon. Member, since he was once responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, that the Canadian Wheat Board's mandate is to market grains in the best commercial interests of western Canadian farmers. When that happens I assure the Hon. Member that we will market every bushel of grain that we can find a customer for through Churchill that is in the western Canadian producers' best interests.

WHEAT BOARD COMMITMENT

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, in response to the Minister I would remind him that in the agreement that was signed in 1984 on the development of the Port of Churchill the Canadian Wheat Board made a commitment to follow best efforts to ensure that not only would there be a continuation but an increase in grain shipments through the Port of Churchill. I do not think that zero shipments are what could be called best efforts.

Considering that the Minister would not meet last week with the committee of the Manitoba Legislature that has been established to examine grain shipments through the Port of Churchill, can we get a commitment from the Minister today that he or other Ministers of the Crown will sit down with officials, Ministers of the Government of Manitoba, Members of the Legislature, to work out a proper program for the

utilization of the Port of Churchill and for the continued shipment of grain through that very important port?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, last week I met with the provincial Minister of Highways in Manitoba. I met with two members of the NDP in Manitoba. I was in Winnipeg a week ago today. I offered to meet with members of the Official Opposition. They did not want to meet with me.

What the Hon. Member is suggesting is that the 1984 agreement calls for the Wheat Board to make best efforts to see that a minimum of 500,000 tonnes of grain go through the port every year. I am satisfied that the Wheat Board is making its best efforts. What the Member is doing is accusing the Wheat Board of not performing up to its mandate. I reject that totally.

Further, if any Member has any evidence whatsoever that the Wheat Board is not living up to its mandate, I will investigate it to the fullest. In the meantime what the Hon. Member is suggesting I do is interfere with the day-to-day operations of the Canadian Wheat Board. What he is suggesting is that we have political interference with one of the best run Crown corporations in the country. There is no way that under my mandate I want to interfere with the day-to-day operations of the Wheat Board. If I did, it would be political interference and Members opposite would be the first to complain.

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IMMIGRATION

ADMISSION OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. For the past month and a half a group of more than 200 Ukrainian refugees from Poland have been waiting in Vienna for word on their acceptance by the Canadian Government as sponsored refugees. These Ukrainians want to come to Canada. The Canadian Ukrainian community wants very much for them to come to Canada. I wonder whether the Minister can tell the House now whether she will allow this group in.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, my staff and my officials have been working with the Ukrainian Aid Committee on behalf of these refugee claimants. We are willing to look at all the applications as they come to us. Those that we can accept into next year's figures we will quite happily accept. It takes a certain amount of time to process some of these anyway. Those who do not come under the above but pass the medical and security checks will be considered through a joint sponsorship between the federal Government and the Ukrainian Aid Committee.