

Mr. Clark: Who decides our best interests?

Mr. Danson: The Americans have been open with us. At each stage we knew what was happening so that we could determine what was in our best interests and how to respond. We have responded, the Americans have co-operated, and everything that needs to be done is being done. We had all the information we needed except some technical information which was not forthcoming initially from the owners of the satellite. Progress is being made on the search. Some deposits have been found which indicate that there has been some re-entry in the Northwest Territories, and every action possible is being taken.

Mr. McKinnon: Mr. Speaker, it is extraordinarily difficult to receive an answer from the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence. My question was simple: When did these two gentlemen find out that there was, in fact, a nuclear package aboard the Cosmos satellite? The Prime Minister claims he was fully briefed, but he has never said he knew that. The Minister of National Defence said he found out last Friday and claims he knew everything there was to know, despite the fact the Americans claim they had full knowledge of this problem on December 19. How can the minister say he was fully briefed, when the Americans knew about it on December 19 and he found out about it last Friday?

Mr. Danson: Mr. Speaker, our officials were notified on the nineteenth there was danger of destabilization in orbit and that the satellite might return to earth at an earlier period than originally predicted. The information was transferred to our headquarters when the possibility was that it would fall on North American territory on the nineteenth. The date was isolated on the twenty-third although the location was not. The Prime Minister and myself were advised on January 20 of this possibility—indeed, the likelihood that it might come down.

At that time there was no indicated likelihood that it would fall on Canadian soil. We were fully informed and fully on alert at that time. We have done everything necessary to proceed. We had all the information we needed in order to proceed. At the briefing at NORAD that information is readily given, but they cannot predict with accuracy what will happen two or three months in advance.

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TRANSPORT

GRAIN—CONGESTION AND DELAYS AT VANCOUVER

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. It arises out of the continuing congestion and delays in the movement of grain out of the port of Vancouver where there have been as many as 40 ships waiting in the harbour. The situation is being aggravated by the enforcement of what have been referred to in the grain trade as unreasonable regulations of the federal Department of Labour. That has resulted in the closing of some terminals and the threat of further closure, all of which

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will have very grave implications on Canada's ability to meet its grain commitments, not to mention the impact of the Canadian grain economy.

Has the minister discussed this very serious problem with the Minister of Labour? Can he assure us that every possible effort is being made to ensure that these regulations have been complied with? One must bear in mind that the regulations are indeed important, but compliance with them and their enforcement must be carried out in a manner which will minimize disruption in further grain movements.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, of course the Minister of Labour is concerned and wants to be sure that appropriate measures are taken to ensure the safety of persons working in our terminal elevators. As a result, he has had to enforce the regulations. Obviously, he will look at the question of the balance between the safety which is required and the need to use the terminals effectively for the amount of grain going to the west coast. However, I should say that this particular temporary closure of a terminal is a very small part of the entire question of the amount of grain which can, or will, move through Vancouver during the course of this winter.

Indeed, there is a backlog of ships waiting. There were problems in December which delayed ships arriving. The good part of this is that part of the congestion will continue and the sales level of the Canadian Wheat Board and others is likely to reach record proportions. Already we are running 50 million bushels ahead of last year's volume. The movement of grain will continue very rapidly indeed. This means that, notwithstanding all the things we have done to improve grain handling on the west coast, when you try to put the absolute maximum through, particularly in winter time, you will obviously run into temporary periods of difficulty.

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Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I trust the minister will meet with management and the enforcement agencies of the Department of Labour to ensure that this matter is closely monitored. Much of the problem in grain movement is the result of lack of proper co-ordination, and under utilization of the Prince Rupert port—it has been reported that the terminal at Prince Rupert port is bursting at the seams with grain—that hundreds of boxcars are to be unloaded, and that there are no ships available at the port.

Has the minister examined that situation? Can he explain the reason for this lack of co-ordination, and can he offer some hope to the prairie grain economy that we will see the end of these disruptions? For your information, Mr. Speaker, we are behind 22 million to 25 million bushels from our movement of grain last year.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, in my previous answer I reassured the Canadian farmer about the movement of grain. We are almost certain this year to set an all-time record in the export of wheat as well as the total export of grains.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!