

Oral Question

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, the hon. member should get his facts straight before making statements without any justification as he has done just now. It is totally false to give the impression that the Parliament of Canada has not spoken on this matter. Here in the House, we have had a debate in which all political parties supported the measure. There was also a bill to amend the Weights and Measures Act, which enabled the government to proceed with metrication. I may remind the hon. member that the bill was supported by Progressive Conservative members at the time.

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● (1440)

[English]

THE ECONOMY**IMPACT OF PROPOSED CHANGE IN CROWSNEST PASS RATE**

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance my question goes to the Minister of Transport. It concerns the impact on the overall economy of the proposed changes in the Crow rate. The minister knows that we have certain geographical disadvantages in being a long way from a seaport, and he also knows that our competitors, the Americans, the Europeans and others, subsidize grain producers. He also knows that the export of grain meant over \$5 billion last year to the Canadian economy.

What studies has the government undertaken as to the implication of changes in the Crow on Canadian trade, the balance of payments, and the value of the Canadian dollar; and will he give a commitment to the House to make these studies public so that we may have a chance to assess them?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, the postulate is obviously wrong, and my hon. friend should know that the federal Government of Canada will continue to subsidize the transportation of grain. If he reads the announcement we made, he will come to the conclusion that the degree of subsidization will be even higher in the future than in the past. At the level of \$800 million a year, on an export of \$5 billion—the figure he has used—this is a fairly substantial degree of subsidization. So the postulate being wrong, the rest of the question is not relevant.

INQUIRY RESPECTING GOVERNMENT STUDIES

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Madam Speaker, I would very simply like the minister to answer the question. What studies have been undertaken by the federal government to assess the impact of the proposed changes on our balance of trade and the value of the dollar? I ask that question because the only study I have seen is one completed only a few weeks ago by a consultant named David Harvey, for the Minister of Agriculture, that said that with the changes in the Crow rate

we would still have 1.9 million tonnes of grain less, which is about 9 per cent of our production. I simply want to know what studies have been undertaken, and will he make those studies public?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, it must have been seen that under the effect of the system as it exists now the farmer pays money to purchase hopper cars through the Canadian Wheat Board. He is also paying money for the storage of grain that he might not have had to pay otherwise. According to the Canadian Wheat Board, he is losing sales around the world in some years, because of the inadequacies of the transportation system. So I think that, looking at it from the point of view of the farmer, and looking at it from the point of view of western Canada in general, there is a tremendous growth in export that will develop from the building of an adequate rail transportation system. If my hon. friend does not believe in that, he could take a trip to the west coast and see what is happening there, in terms of port developments that have been built in order to receive these goods coming from western Canada and going abroad, to all parts of the world.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Madam Speaker, how can the federal government make a major change when it has not made any studies as to the impact of this change on the balance of payments and on the value of the Canadian dollar? Is the minister admitting to the House that it has not done any studies of the impact on our economy?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I will see if any in-depth analysis has been made of that, but any child knows that if you have an adequate rail transportation system in the west, all these commodities that are going to double in production in the next five years and triple in the next ten years—I mean grain, I mean coal, I mean potash, I mean petro-chemicals, etc.—will be exported and the balance of the export-import trade of Canada will be improved.

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CANADA POST**AGREEMENT ON HIRING OF PART-TIME LETTER CARRIERS IN SUMMER**

Mr. Bud Bradley (Haldimand-Norfolk): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for the Canada Post Corporation. The minister will know, I am sure, of the latest policy set up by the corporation pertaining to the hiring of part-time help to replace letter carriers this summer. He is probably also aware that the corporation has said that this agreement was arrived at with the letter carriers in order to allow it to hire part-time help, which it was not allowed to do before. Since this arrangement or agreement, Madam