

Senator Olson: Does the government have any position—perhaps, if it does, it is not willing to state it at this time, and, if that is the case, I understand it—by which to ensure that the loading of the grain continues now that the workers seem to be disposed to do so? In other words, is the government ready to legislate an end to the lockout for that purpose?

Senator Murray: It was against the background of the statement by the union that the workers were prepared to move the grain that the Minister of Labour sent the telegram, to which I referred a few minutes ago, to the employers asking them to facilitate this course of action. As I have said, if they refuse to do that, we will have to consider what our next step will be. Obviously, parliamentary action would be one of the options.

TRANSPORT

CLOSING OF CN SHOPS, MONCTON

Hon. L. Norbert Thériault: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate, and it too applies to mediation. Has he anything to report to the Senate regarding the negotiations or mediation between CN and the unions at Moncton?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): I regret that I have nothing further to add to what I said last week. I will undertake to check with the Minister of Transport to see if there is anything further that can be reported on that matter.

Senator Thériault: Does the Leader of the Government know that a mediator has been appointed?

Senator Murray: Well, that does not change my situation. I have no further report from the minister or from a mediator on the matter. When I have further information, I will communicate it to the house.

Senator Thériault: Thank you.

AGRICULTURE

WESTERN GRAIN FARMERS—GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Hon. Hazen Argue: Honourable senators, I should like to direct a question to the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I have been following with interest the statements made in the other place with regard to the proposed deficiency payment to western grain farmers. Can the government leader indicate, from deliberations regarding this policy, whether it is to be a one-shot affair due to an emergency that exists now or whether consideration is being given to a longer term plan which would provide income support to farmers in the future, if conditions are as bad then as they are now? Is this merely consideration of a deficiency payment at this particular time?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, there are a lot of questions there. I can only tell the honourable senator that the Minister of Agriculture has con-

vened a meeting of deputy ministers of agriculture on Thursday next to discuss further and to define the assistance package that was contemplated in the joint declaration of ministers of agriculture last August 27. The Minister of Agriculture will also be meeting in a matter of days with Canadian farm leaders to define the elements of that package.

Senator Argue: Can the government leader indicate where we are with regard to the Prime Minister's commitment of April 30 last that, subject to a recommendation from a committee of the House of Commons, there would be put into effect a two-price system for wheat that could go as high as \$11 per bushel? The committee recommended \$10 and the farmers are still waiting for the fulfilment of what I believe to have been a clear commitment by the Prime Minister that there would be an increase in the two-price wheat system.

Senator Murray: I believe that the honourable senator is referring to an increase in the domestic price of wheat.

Senator Argue: That is correct.

Senator Murray: I believe that price is now of the order of \$7 or \$8 per bushel. The matter of a further increase is still under consideration.

Senator Argue: Do I take it from the minister's answer that an announcement on this matter could be forthcoming? Can he assure us that the \$1 billion being considered is not tied in with the two-price wheat system—in other words, that there will not be an announcement of \$200 million that will be taken off the \$1 billion—or is this all part of one package that the government is considering?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, an announcement will be made about any increase in the domestic price of wheat when a decision is taken. With regard to its relationship to the assistance package now being discussed between the federal government and the provinces and with farm groups, that package, I repeat, has yet to be defined.

It is the position of the government that it will not be reallocating moneys from existing farm programs; but, of course, we reserve the right to use existing legislation to deliver the enhanced cash flow that we have in mind.

Senator Argue: I have a supplementary question for the government leader. If it is not too presumptuous of me, I would like to ask him if he will convey this idea to the people who are considering this policy. I hope that the announcement of a deficiency payment, if on bushels of grain, will not be an open-ended announcement that goes to the totality of the production of every grain farmer. I believe that the time has arrived that government policy should consider giving economic support to family farms and use the increased amount of money that would be saved in having some kind of cut-off or limit on the total production for a given unit that would receive such payments. I put that to the Leader of the Government, because I consider it to be a major element of public policy that should be addressed. I do not often refer to American policies, but they do have a ceiling on their payments and I believe that some kind of ceiling should be