

*Oral Questions*

beings, so that the onus of responsibility for any ill-effects is placed on the producer and not paid by society as a whole?

**Miss Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, I can confirm, without any doubt, that the burden of proof that there is no harm done to humans through chemical substances in spray or other forms remains entirely with the manufacturers. This has always been the position of my department and it will continue to be the position.

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**TRANSPORT****GRAIN TRANSPORTATION DELAYS—COST TO WESTERN FARMERS**

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport: it has to do with the latest revelations connected with the cost to the western farmer in lost sales to the extent of \$150 million in consequence of grain transportation delays and, as well the damage to Canada's international reputation. The figures are unchallengeable.

What is the government and the minister doing to bring about something in the nature of responsibility in connection with this matter, so that the western farmer is not subjected to terrific losses in consequence of the failure of this government to act?

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, it is really astonishing that the right hon. gentleman should refer to an export of over 800 million bushels of grain as being some kind of a disaster for the western farmer. When he was prime minister, 440 million bushels used to be awfully good. Eight hundred million or perhaps even close to a record is what we shall be achieving this year. There have been shipping difficulties, certainly: not, however, peculiar to Canada.

● (1442)

As I indicated to the House—the right hon. member may have been absent—in the middle of May, 39 ships were waiting in the American gulf. The right hon. gentleman would like to suggest that we are losing markets: the announcement the other day of 110 million bushels sold to China certainly gives the lie to that argument.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, that answer is in accordance with the departure from the truth which is not uncommon on the part of the minister. I am quoting from the advisory committee of the Canadian Wheat Board which today, at 2.02 p.m., made the following declaration: it referred to the cost to farmers of more than \$150 million in lost sales, the damage to Canada's reputation as a reliable supplier, and said that some action must be taken. Therefore, I have good company, in the advisory committee of the Wheat Board, to question the

minister who is so far removed from the facts that it is impossible for him to tell the truth.

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

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I put it down as intentional. It may be negligence. Was the advisory committee wrong today when it said the railways should be directed to take immediate action to build up their grain car fleet and speed up grain shipments? That was not in May, but on June 22. The advisory committee of the Wheat Board says there is a serious failure and that the western farmer is being subjected to losses that should not take place. Who is now deceiving the country as a whole: the minister or the advisory committee?

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, it may be recognized by some, if not by the right hon. gentleman, that notwithstanding that, we are setting or nearly setting a record because of the standards we are setting. It is possible for the advisory board to speak of the further opportunity which we may have had—

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

**Mr. Lang:** The fact is that in moving 820 million or 830 million bushels into export: we are moving the whole of the equivalent of a record crop, plus some more. The right hon. gentleman asks what we are doing to become more effective in this regard. Part of the answer is 8,000 hopper cars, repairing a couple of thousand boxcars a couple of years ago, \$700 million for rail rebuilding, co-ordinators at the terminals, an exchange of cars between Calgary and Edmonton, and the block shipping system. These are all elements which have made it possible for us to achieve 800 million bushels of export.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman answers everything but the allegations made today by the advisory committee of the Wheat Board which states how serious the situation is. Has the minister not been given that information? Do I have to pass it on to him? Are they afraid to let him know the facts?

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the right hon. gentleman that I am aware of the facts and have been following the situation very closely.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Then why don't you act?

**Mr. Lang:** It is not a simple matter of accusing the railways. At this point in time, perhaps unknown to the right hon. member, we have a problem of damp grain moved into the Saskatchewan wheat pool elevator: it is not capable of operating effectively. It was not the fault of the railways but of some other part of the system. Because of those sorts of difficulties, difficulties of ships being delayed in October and November, last week I indicated the intention to appoint a systems expert analyst to further improve the turn-around time of our railway equipment.