

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

REASON FOR INCREASE IN GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES OF POOL ACCOUNT—REFERENCE OF REPORT TO COMMITTEE

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): My question is for the Minister of Transport, Mr. Speaker, in his capacity as minister in charge of the Wheat Board. It arises out of the report issued by the Wheat Board related specifically to the wheat pool account. Can the hon. gentleman explain why administrative and general expenses in connection with the operations of this account increased by more than 50 per cent, from \$68.6 million in 1974-75 to \$103.8 million in 1975-76, while handling roughly the same amount of wheat? Since this cost will have a direct relationship to the final payment which was received by the producers for this pool account, would the minister ensure that these additional costs will be adequately and properly accounted for and explained to the House and the producers of Canada?

● (1200)

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the Wheat Board has been making a very special effort to explain in great detail the costs and administrative issues involved in connection with the board and it will continue to do so. I will be happy to answer any questions in greater detail for the hon. member. A number of costs were higher this year. Interest rates at a very high level and initial prices being very high too, meant that carrying costs were very high; but I would not want to attribute the total cost of this by any means until I can have a more detailed reply for the hon. member.

Mr. Mazankowski: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Inasmuch as the minister has pointed out that interest, exchange and bank charges accounted for \$21 million of the \$35 million increase in that particular account, which amounts to an increase of 130 per cent over the previous year, has the minister checked into the matter to ascertain whether there is anything abnormal about this and, if so, is he in a position to explain it to the House? Could he also indicate when the annual report might be referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture so that this whole matter may be pursued in a more thorough fashion?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I have not looked for abnormalities but I am satisfied with the audited report of the Wheat Board's activities. The question of when the Wheat Board might appear before the committee with its annual report is something that I would be pleased to discuss with the members of this House.

Privilege—Mrs. Holt
MULTICULTURALISM

POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE IN STATUS OF BRANCH AND INCREASE IN STAFF

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State in charge of multiculturalism. In view of the emphasis which the government appears to be placing on multiculturalism by the appointment of a minister, does the minister anticipate that the multiculturalism office will be raised above the level of a directorate and will there be an increase in staff?

Hon. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Mr. Speaker, no consideration has been given to that matter. It might be very helpful if the same question were asked of the Secretary of State, who no doubt is also giving consideration to that end.

Hon. John Roberts (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, the reorganization of the department is a matter which we have under study at the present time. This is one of the questions which we will certainly examine and it is a question I am anxious to discuss with my colleague, who is proving to be very effective in the prosecution of his new duties as Minister of State responsible for multiculturalism.

Mr. Paproski: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, for the new minister. Has the staff of the minister's directorate prepared a reading list for him so that he can respond to questions in the House, and if so, when does he expect to be able to do so?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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PRIVILEGE

MRS. HOLT—"LEAK" OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Mrs. Simma Holt (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, as I advised yesterday, I feel impelled to rise on a question of privilege with regard to the publication of confidential documents related to a subcommittee on which I serve.

When I entered this House in 1974, I felt a great pride in being able to bring with me the depth and richness of what I considered as one of the great careers in public service, that of journalism. I knew that in a place such as this the importance of the role of the journalist was recognized and given stature. It happened in the British House of Commons. In Westminster the press was called the "fourth estate". I always believed that, next to parliament, no group could better serve the public interest.

But as time went on I found that a small group of men and women among the 200 in the fourth estate here served, not the public, but their own interests. They fed their undeveloped egos—those few—and the need for power which in their minds must exceed that of parliament itself. There is current evi-