

Oral Questions

knowing whether he wants to have the capital punishment debate first or the economic debate.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the Prime Minister did not understand my question. I know he was working on something and I do not object to that, but I did put the question very clearly to him. In light of the fact that a reading of the order paper would indicate that the capital punishment debate would appear to take priority over economic issues and measures such as pension legislation to assist people to cope with the high cost of living, will the Prime Minister set aside the priority of the debate on capital punishment in favour of economic measures to assist those people who need assistance?

Mr. Trudeau: Well, the hon. member knows that the order in which measures appear on the order paper is not necessarily that in which they will be called. We will let the House know in advance, through the House leader, in what order they will be proceeded with.

Mr. Woolliams: I am not getting the answer, Mr. Speaker, and I think I should have the right to put one further question. In light of the fact the Prime Minister is the head of the government, and no doubt plans are being laid as to what measures will have priority, would he not tell the House that the priority of the debate on capital punishment will take second place at least to those economic measures that have been discussed with his ministers today?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I certainly could not tell the House that because I do not know if, in conceptual terms, this is a correct way of putting it. The two questions are extremely important. I do not think that the issue of capital punishment is of lesser importance.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Woolliams: That is the point; some of us do.

Mr. Trudeau: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question of knowing whether a man should be hanged or not is not of lesser importance to this government.

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GRAIN

AGREEMENT WITH RAILWAYS RESPECTING
DEPRECIATION CHARGES AND MAINTENANCE COSTS
FOR HOPPER CARS

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the minister in charge of the Wheat Board. In view of the fact that a number of hopper cars for moving grain are now out of service, can he tell the House whether an agreement has been reached with the CPR and the CNR on depreciation charges and maintenance costs for these cars, whether the railway companies will bear these costs, and also inform the House of the type of contract agreed upon?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Yes, Mr. Speaker, an agreement was reached between the railways and the Canadian Wheat Board. I think the simplest thing

[Mr. Trudeau.]

would be for me to make that agreement available to the hon. member.

Mr. Gleave: Can the minister also inform the House whether he has an assurance that the CPR and the CNR will maintain their normal numbers of boxcars and other rolling stock in service so that the hopper cars will be in addition to what normally would be in service for the movement of grain?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member will find that there is a clause in the agreement covering this issue.

INQUIRY AS TO TRANSFERRING OF CANADIAN BOXCARS
TO UNITED STATES TO FACILITATE U.S. SHIPMENTS

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): As a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us whether or not, during the recent crisis in the United States as a result of the shortage of U.S. boxcars to move all shipments of grain to ports for its overseas customers, Canada was requested to supply boxcars, and did Canada do so?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, so far as I know there was no question of Canadian boxcars being made available, although I would like to double-check that. What I can tell the hon. member is that for the purposes of grain movement the railways have been supplying cars at the times and in the volumes essentially required by the Canadian Wheat Board. That fact is demonstrated by the other fact that exports from this country this year are running ahead of last year, even though last year was an outstanding record year.

Mr. Korchinski: May I ask the minister whether, if there is no formal agreement, there is an understanding between the two countries that in the event that problems such as this arise each country will help the other in a crisis?

Mr. Lang: I know of no such agreement, Mr. Speaker.

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FISHERIES

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON POSITION TO BE TAKEN
BY CANADA AT LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of the Environment and Fisheries. In view of the importance, particularly to eastern Canada, of the forthcoming Law of the Sea Conference, can the minister tell the House whether he intends to make a statement shortly on the nature of the government's preparation and the positions to be taken by the government at that conference?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries): I might say yes, Mr. Speaker. I might also add that there is a meeting in Vancouver where Canada is hosting discussions with all fishing nations on the basic policy approach that we might take at the next Law of the Sea Conference.