

Oral Questions

brought millions to the CPR, but the Railway adamantly refuses to spend any of this on transportation.

Now this Liberal Government is again giving the people's money—almost a billion dollars a year—to the railways. The Crow is being replaced by a complicated bureaucratic price formula primarily for the benefit of the railways and the Government. The interests of the producers are secondary, and the potential of the livestock and hog industry in western Canada is completely negated.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD**COST TO FARMERS OF DEMURRAGE PAYMENTS**

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Lethbridge-Foothills): Madam Speaker, in 1981-82 prairie farmers grew a record crop. Grain exports reached 27 million tonnes, 15 per cent over the previous record set in 1979-80. Yet there is an item in the financial statements of the Canadian Wheat Board that continues to receive hardly any consideration, that is, the cost of demurrage. That item has often been downplayed as of minor importance in comparison to the total balance of the Board's operational expenses. But charges paid to vessel owners for delays in loading beyond a normal period continued to be high and totalled over \$4 million for handling wheat alone in 1981-82, a substantial increase from \$1.5 million in the previous year.

The Wheat Board does not consider last year's demurrage cost excessive as there were previous years when some \$20 million was paid as a penalty for delays. Yet the fact is that the demurrage payments of thousands of dollars a day are incurred year in and year out, a cost that ultimately is passed on to the farmers.

It is of the utmost importance that the Canadian farmer, already under the tremendous pressure of high interest rates combined with Liberal Government Fuel costs, be no longer penalized by the inefficiency of the system designed to operate and facilitate the flow of grain, a fundamental source of our national wealth.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE SENATE**STATUS OF SENATOR CONVICTED OF INDICTABLE OFFENCE**

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister and concerns the status of Senator Irvine Barrow. A Supreme Court jury in Nova Scotia convicted Senator Barrow of a violation of the Criminal Code of Canada. The violation is an indictable offence, which must be considered a felony and a crime for the purposes of the

British North America Act. Will the Prime Minister confirm whether Senator Barrow's conviction means that his place must become vacant by virtue of the British North America Act, or does the other place decide his status? I also ask the Prime Minister what role his Government will play in determining Senator Barrow's status, and what responsibility he has in this matter.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member sent me notice of the question but it was just at the beginning of Question Period and I have not had time to look into the matter; particularly, I have not read the judgment. The Hon. Member says that the Senator was convicted of a felony. The Hon. Member may be more wise in law than I am, but I do not know of any definition of "felony" in the Criminal Code.

Mr. Blenkarn: "Indictable offence" is what he said.

Mr. Trudeau: Well, I heard him say the word "felony". Now I have more people getting into the act; I hope you will recognize a supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

I do know that the Senate and House of Commons Act speaks for itself. The qualifications of a Senator are clearly defined. As to the latter part of the question—will the Government be taking any initiatives—I believe it is for the Senate to determine any question relating to the status of its own Members. That is my preliminary answer. I know of no way in which the Government can take or should take any initiatives as regards that body.

REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING CONVICTION

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, I can appreciate that the Prime Minister has not had an opportunity to consider the conviction rendered against Senator Barrow. I point out to him that there are published reports in Halifax which indicate that the Senator has said there is "no problem" with respect to his conviction and he can take his seat in the Senate. I suggest to the Prime Minister that the public may be outraged if there is no action taken. Therefore, will he conduct an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the conviction of Senator Barrow and report to this House as quickly as he can, so the public will know what the standards are for parliamentarians in these matters and we will not be left to speculate on what Senator Barrow's fate will be while he pursues other legal remedies, such as an appeal?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Well, Madam Speaker, I find the suggestion of the Hon. Member rather amazing, that the Government should take the initiative to inquire into the status of Members of Parliament. If he is suggesting that we have that duty for the Senate, he probably would suggest we have that duty for the House of Commons. Yet I would think Members opposite particularly, as well as Members on our side, would be incensed if they thought it was