

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, January 21, 1969

The house met at 2 p.m.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

GRAIN

VANCOUVER, B.C.—REQUEST THAT STEPS BE TAKEN TO EXPEDITE SHIPMENTS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question, preferably to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, or the Minister of Agriculture. I ask whether in light of the continued congestion at Vancouver, which according to the January 17 market letter of James Richardson and Sons Limited—this was only last week—caused the loss of an additional 17,000-ton wheat sale to Japan, the minister could tell the house what concrete steps the government is taking to move the requested grade of grain to the ships waiting in Vancouver harbour?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I am in no position to comment on the allegation that a sale to Japan was lost because of this situation; I would have to check. But I have already explained to the house that we are confronted in Vancouver with a situation that results from weather conditions, obviously, also from the desire to ship to terminal elevators for drying purposes as much damp grain as possible, and finally from the growth, unexpected in some cases, of exports. As I indicated before, and as my hon. friend knows, sales that were to be made by the United States to Japan have been made by Canada. This has created a situation in Vancouver from which we are trying to get out. All efforts are being made by the transportation committee and its subcommittee in Vancouver to remedy the situation as quickly as possible.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I do not make any comment on the explanation given by the minister with regard to why we are in this position. I would like to ask the minister whether he would take an early opportunity, this week I would

hope, to spell out the concrete action the government is taking and proposes to take to meet the difficulty in which it finds itself. I am not asking the minister to explain now why we are in this position, but I ask whether he will make a statement on motions as to what concrete action the government proposes to take to get the western farmer and the country out of this difficulty.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated that all possible steps are being taken. I have also recognized that a serious situation was created by the causes that I have also indicated. A few days ago the hon. member for Mackenzie came into the house with statistics, saying that there were 1,000 fewer car loadings as compared to the same period last year. I have checked on that, and find it is not the whole truth. The whole truth is that cars loaded for Vancouver—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I wonder whether the minister would not agree that we are becoming involved in debate. My understanding of the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition was whether a statement would be made on motions.

Mr. Stanfield: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In other words, I am asking the minister whether he will tell the whole truth, including the concrete steps that the government proposes to take to deal with this problem.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): A supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether the minister would go out west and really see the conditions on the prairies today, in order to realize the awfulness of the situation. I ask him at the same time whether, in view of the high authority of James Richardson and Sons Limited, he would consult the Minister without Portfolio from Manitoba and learn something about the wheat situation.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member for Mackenzie rising on a point of order?

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I believe it is