

Wheat Sale to Soviet Union

Western Red Spring Wheat—13 per cent protein. The buyer also has the option of taking No. 3 and/or No. 4 Canada Western Amber Durum Wheat as part of the over-all purchase contract. This contract, of course, in taking up the balance of the outstanding contract and a new portion, carries out the comments made by Mr. Gromyko to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and myself a year ago and most recently repeated in the Soviet Union to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that the Soviet Union would turn to Canada when they next needed wheat.

Mr. F. J. Bigg (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, no news could be more welcome to Canada than news of the sale of wheat. I must say that there has been a big change since a sign, 12 feet long and eight feet high, was erected by the Liberal party in my district on the only occasion when any Prime Minister—I refer to Mr. Diefenbaker—has ever visited the town of Westlock, saying that his major crime was the sale of wheat to Communist China. I am delighted that at last the present administration, whether it is on the road to Damascus or the road to Russia, is making sure that any breakthrough in international relations is followed up on each and every occasion.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, the same challenge which caused the Premier of Saskatchewan to ask for a postponement of the constitutional conference has robbed me this morning of all the wheat experts in my party in this House. I am therefore glad to rise as leader of this party to congratulate the Wheat Board on this sale and to express our pleasure, without any reservations, that it has taken place. I notice that no credit was given to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) for the sale as a result of his visit to Russia, perhaps in order to be consistent with the statement he made some time ago that it was not his business to sell wheat, and it was important not to break that record.

We are glad that this sale has taken place. I would merely add that there are other countries in the world which need Canadian wheat. The proposal we have made many times should be given consideration by the government, namely, that we should provide the developing countries that require wheat, flour and bread, and whose people are hungry with the necessary long-term credit so that they may buy our wheat, and thus improve the situation of Canadian farmers as well as feed the hungry people of the world.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, in my turn I wish to say that I am satisfied with that transaction which will certainly please the western wheat producers who will benefit from it. I think that similar transactions should be made with other countries which, as stated earlier by the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), would need Canadian wheat.

This sale is made up of two separate contracts; one for the balance of 9 million tons of wheat which the Soviet Union had undertaken to buy in 1966 and the other for a new sale.

[Mr. Lang.]

In addition, in his statement the minister pointed out and I quote:

As in previous contracts with the U.S.S.R., the terms of the sale call for payment in cash at the time of delivery.

Mr. Speaker, Russia will not pay us in Canadian dollars or rubles, but in gold ingots at world market prices of \$35 an ounce, when it costs \$16 an ounce to produce. It means that the price paid will in fact be half of what the farmers expect to get.

I wanted to point that out to the government and at the same time to congratulate it on this successful deal.

[English]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

ECONOMIC POLICIES TO BE DISCUSSED AT CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE—REQUESTS BY ONTARIO AND QUEBEC

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. In consideration of the statement made yesterday by Prime Minister Davis of Ontario that he intends to bring forcefully to the attention of the federal government at the Victoria constitutional conference his province's concern over federal policies which create economic hardship, can the Prime Minister now tell the House if Mr. Davis has indicated the specific economic areas he would like to discuss? If so, what are they?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker. I must confess I am not aware of what Mr. Davis had in mind. The House will recall that he requested some time ago that an additional day be added to the constitutional conference to discuss economic matters. However, since the federal budget and tax reform will be brought down after the conference, it is my understanding that he has now suggested that this additional day be not added to the conference and that economic matters, particularly those relating to the budget, be discussed some time later, presumably at a finance ministers meeting in the month of July.

Mr. Ritchie: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. As the Quebec Minister of Welfare, Mr. Castonguay, has suggested that Ottawa's policies are the cause of Quebec's poverty, has that province indicated to the Prime Minister the areas of economic policy which it wishes to be discussed at Victoria? * * *

Mr. Trudeau: No, Mr. Speaker. That seems like a very general statement, such as the opposition often makes.

CONSULTATION WITH PROVINCES ON PENDING TAX CHANGES

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, have the provinces indicated to the federal government that they