

Inquiries of the Ministry

Prime Minister a question concerning the T.C.A. overhaul and maintenance base in Winnipeg. My question will not take him by surprise because he has received a telegram from E. A. Smith, the chairman of the special committee on this subject.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether he is now prepared to announce his decision concerning this base, in order to honour the commitment he made during the election campaign and when he met with the Manitoba delegation on June 18.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will undoubtedly honour the commitments I have made on this matter, which have been misrepresented in so many quarters. The decision of the government in this matter will be made known as soon as it has been able to give consideration to all the factors involved, including the report in question, which is only one factor.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I could ask a supplementary question of the Prime Minister. The *Winnipeg Tribune* of Thursday, September 26, quotes Mr. Molgat, the provincial leader in Manitoba, as saying concerning this overhaul and maintenance base—

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Churchill:—that he had no assurances “at present” that the base would be retained “except statements by Mr. Pearson in December”. Do we take it from this that the Prime Minister gave certain assurances to Mr. Molgat in December that the base would be maintained in Winnipeg?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I gave no assurances to Mr. Molgat that I have not already given in public and about which my hon. friend knows.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister a supplementary question. In view of the fact that plans are under way in Manitoba for another delegation to come to Ottawa on this matter, can the Prime Minister say whether the government's announcement will be made soon, so this delegation can ascertain whether or not it will have to make the trip?

Mr. Pearson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I hope the announcement will be made at the earliest possible date.

TRADE

WHEAT—INQUIRIES AS TO SALE TO RUSSIA

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Lawrence E. Kindt (MacLeod): Mr. Speaker, there is talk among farmers that [Mr. Churchill.]

the price had to be greatly lowered, by 25 cents to 30 cents a bushel, in relation to the March future price at Chicago in order to close the wheat deal with the Russians. Can the Minister of Trade and Commerce give us some idea of the price sacrificed per bushel on this Russian wheat deal?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. gentleman for making the first reference in this house to this magnificent transaction.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Sharp: I should have been very reluctant to do so myself.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Sharp: May I assure my hon. friend that the reports he referred to are pure fiction. The Canadian wheat board entered into the contract with the Soviet authorities at the going market price at that time.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Bow River): A supplementary question of the minister. What was the going market price at that time?

Mr. Sharp: As the hon. gentleman knows, the Canadian wheat board does not reveal its transactions. If the hon. gentleman would like to know what going market prices were at that time he has only to look at the list.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. As I understand it, the minister informed the newspapers of this country that it was a \$500 million deal. If he can tell the newspapers what the price was, then surely he can disclose that fact to this House of Commons.

Mr. Robert Simpson (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Trade and Commerce. In light of the very disturbing reports that none of the shipments of grain to Russia will be exported through the port of Churchill, can the minister tell the house how this unbelievable situation has arisen, and would he also take another look at the situation and see whether a good portion of this grain can go through this port by means of keeping it open a little longer this fall?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I would be very happy to answer this question. I received notice from the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam that he would ask the same question. Although the feasibility of using Churchill for shipments to the Soviet union was a matter of discussion between the Canadian wheat board and officials of the U.S.S.R., it was not found possible to use Churchill as a port of exit for the grain recently sold to that country. This important port has a