

Oral Questions

for the Cape Breton Development Corporation. In light of reports that the Cape Breton Development Corporation is planning a strip mining venture, can the minister advise if, first, this is correct and, second, if it is, can he assure the House that no strip mining for coal will take place by Devco unless proper and adequate plans are laid down and duly announced for a program of backfilling and reforestation?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, to the extent that I am technically competent to do so, I can report to the hon. member that I understand this is in contemplation but so far as I am aware it has not reached anything close to the decision-making point. I can also assure him that the matter will be pursued much more thoroughly before anything goes ahead. I have no doubt that, should it go ahead, conservation measures will be taken. If he will permit me, I will take the balance of the question as notice and send him a written answer.

Mr. Muir: In view of the very bad experience some years ago in Cape Breton connected with strip mining—I thank the minister for his reply—will he assure me that he will bring back a report, as already intimated, affirming that no strip mining will take place unless proper measures are carried out so that the topography and the environment of the area will not be ruined?

Mr. Jamieson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. To repeat my earlier comment, I do not think I am competent to talk about the technical side of it, but I will provide a written answer and I hope it will be satisfactory to the hon. member.

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ENERGY

**PROVISION OF OIL SUPPLY TO INDUSTRY IN
CARLETON-CHARLOTTE TO PREVENT LAY-OFF OF
WORKERS**

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to earlier questions by the hon. member for Central Nova and the Leader of the Opposition. Inasmuch as the international exchange of petroleum products has been interrupted by the present supply situation, and because it is estimated that some 2,500 people will be unemployed in my constituency on or about January 25 if supply cannot be renewed, does the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce have any plans to put these people back to work since there is no oil coming from Montreal?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, if the situation is as serious as the hon. member has indicated, I hope he will make every effort to see that the allocation bill is passed by the House just as fast as possible.

[Mr. Muir.]

AGRICULTURE

**ALLEGED SHORTAGE OF FERTILIZER—REQUEST THAT
MAJOR SUPPLIERS APPEAR BEFORE HOUSE COMMITTEE**

Mr. Craig Stewart (Marquette): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. As it now appears evident, according to reports from dealers across Canada, that there will be a serious shortage of all types of fertilizer, would the minister reconvene the agricultural committee of the House and request the major suppliers of fertilizer to appear before the committee, thus allowing that committee to ascertain whether a shortage faces Canadians in the coming year and what action needs to be taken?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, first I differ with the premise of the question because I do not foresee any shortage of fertilizer. In some instances over 500 per cent more fertilizer has been delivered than at any time in Canada's history to Canadian farmers. I am still optimistic that supplies will be adequate to meet the demands of the producers. We are still having ongoing meetings with fertilizer companies, suppliers, etc. The problem now mainly concerns distribution and the obtaining of some of the ingredients that go into the making of the final product.

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Agriculture. I ask the minister whether the industry has informed him of pending shortages, especially of nitrogen fertilizer and anhydrous ammonia, and whether some 60,000 tons of raw product are still being held back because of lack of railway cars?

● (1510)

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt there is a transportation problem, but at this time of the year there is very little fertilizer being used; it is mostly being put in store. As far as that goes, we have asked farmers to do this. I am optimistic. Last year we asked them to do so later than this year, and they were supplied with 50 per cent more fertilizer than ever before in the nation's history. We are doing everything humanly possible to make our producers the most efficient in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Looking around the House, hon. members will notice there are about 50 members rising for supplementaries or questions. Obviously most of them will be disappointed. If members have questions that could wait until tomorrow, perhaps they would wait until tomorrow. We still have supplementaries on this matter. I will recognize the hon. member for Lisgar, the hon. member for Brandon-Souris and then the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Murta: I again ask the Minister of Agriculture whether the industry has informed him of a pending shortage, especially of anhydrous ammonia and nitrogen fertilizer, and can he also tell us what magnitude of price increase the farmers can expect this coming spring?

Mr. Whelan: As hon. members know, Mr. Speaker, manufacturers of fertilizer are one of the largest users of