

bearings, required that 75 per cent of the entire Canadian rail car fleet should be equipped with roller bearings by December 31, 1987. This requirement is being met by having all cars scheduled for retro-fit equipped with roller bearings.

The chemical manufacturers are subject to several federal statutes respecting the packaging and transportation of dangerous goods—they are, therefore, not self-regulating. Certain aspects of the road transport of dangerous goods are not presently covered by regulations but will be in the near future when the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act regulations are promulgated and come into force.

CN MARINE AND CN RAIL—REDUCTIONS IN SERVICE

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Senator Muir raised a question on November 14 regarding CN Marine and reduction of service, and a supplementary question was asked by Senator Thériault regarding Canadian National's plan for CN Marine.

(The answer follows:)

With respect to the announced changes to the North-Sydney-Port-aux-Basques ferry services, the intention is to replace the present fleet of older ships by more modern efficient ships with greater capacity. This will be phased in over a period of three to five years commencing in the fall of 1985.

The vessel modernization program will result in the loss of approximately 250 jobs over this period. It is expected that a sizeable number of reductions can be achieved through attrition as employees take early retirement. Employee seniority rights will be protected and employees will have available to them a range of other benefits through their collective agreements, including: retraining programs, mobility incentives and supplementary unemployment benefits.

The ferries between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are owned by CN Marine. In the future it is foreseen that CN Marine will be separated from CN corporate and will be established as a separate crown corporation in order to respond more effectively to the needs of Atlantic Canada.

IMMIGRATION

ENTRY OF SOVIET REFUGEES—GOVERNMENT POLICY

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, this next question was raised on November 14, 1984 by Senator Grafstein regarding immigration and the entry of Soviet refugees when he asked what government policy is.

(The answer follows:)

There are two separate issues connected with the response to this question.

A parish of the Russian Orthodox Church in Toronto has been instrumental in initiating applications for Rus-

sian prisoners of war in the hands of Afghan resistance. As prisoners of war these people are not refugees and they do not fall within the scope Canada's ongoing humanitarian programs for the displaced and persecuted.

With regard to the two prisoners who were in the United Kingdom, I can confirm they did not apply to come to Canada. A spokesman for the Toronto group interested in prisoners indicated on the national radio network that his organization was not interested in sponsoring these two ex-prisoners because of what he alleged to be personal problems on their part.

With regard to the group of six prisoners still in Pakistan, the law requires that all applicants be interviewed for immigration to ensure they comply with requirements including health and background. The health aspect is particularly important for persons being sponsored by private groups because they must assume the costs of settlement.

A special team was assembled in September by the Department of External Affairs to proceed to the border area of Afghanistan to locate the POWs and conduct the necessary examinations. An operation of less than 48 hours duration was envisaged in order to determine quickly whether these applicants were able to meet minimum selection requirements. The attempt had to be abandoned for 2 main reasons: sensitivity on the part of the local authorities and lack of time and facilities within the constraints these authorities imposed on Canada, to conduct medical tests essential in making determination as to whether these people are addicted to hard drugs or otherwise inadmissible to Canada.

Faced with an impasse, the Canadian Government was forced to explore other possibilities including obtaining interim protection and assistance by a third country. This is because it is believed these applicants have the same health problems as the two Russian soldiers. Approaches have been made to several countries to determine whether these prisoners could be removed to safer surroundings where they could be examined in a more orderly way.

The Red Cross was also approached to ensure that they may intervene and use their good offices if there is any threat to the lives of the prisoners as they have done with a number of other Russian soldiers from the area. These people have been in the hands of their captors for two years, hence there is no reason to believe they are in imminent danger of execution. The Red Cross program is the appropriate response if danger does arise.

The Commission of Employment and Immigration, in cooperation with the Department of External Affairs, is exploring ways to bring them to Canada.