

Oral Questions

sitting idle at Dartmouth, and that has contributed to the sinking of the *William Carson*. Will the minister have these allegations investigated and will he report to the House? What is the situation with respect to the propriety of a member of the ministry making these statements which indicate a scandalous lack of knowledge and scandalous behaviour by a government minister?

Mr. Basford: Before responding to the hon. member I would like to check the statements first to make sure they are free of exaggeration. With regard to the shortage of icebreakers, should that be the case, the hon. member will be happy to know that Her Excellency, Madam Leger and I launched a New Class III Arctic icebreaker in Vancouver last Friday night.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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AGRICULTURE

POTATOES—IMPACT OF FREIGHT RATE INCREASES

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. With respect to the announcements last week by the railroads of an increase in the rail rate on the movement of potatoes from Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick of 20 per cent on September 1 and of 12 per cent next January 1, and the subsequent meeting which took place in Charlottetown of those representing various aspects of the potato industry including federal representatives, a meeting at which, I understand, the Department of Agriculture was not represented, can the minister indicate whether his department has had a chance to analyse the impact of that announcement on the potato industry, particularly with respect to next year's sales in central Canadian markets? Second, in view of the regular increases over the last five years of something like 10 per cent each year, has any explanation from the railroads been requested?

● (1450)

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I want to put the record straight. I am sure the hon. member did not mean to suggest that I did not meet with the potato marketing board. I did meet with the Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture, and I received a brief from that federation. I have discussed this with my colleagues here in Ottawa. The premier of Prince Edward Island is coming here on, I believe, June 17. Unfortunately, I will not be here that day because of another commitment. I have to be out of the country. However, he will know what my feelings are because I have discussed it with him personally. He knows what my intention and the intention of the government is at the present time. I have not made this intention public, but I think potato growers will be satisfied with our decision when it is made.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I think it would be useful if the minister would put some of the views of his

[Mr. Crosbie.]

department on the record, inasmuch as he was fairly forthright earlier in terms of the necessity of establishing a new fleet of refrigerated cars for potato growers in those two provinces. With respect to the statements which were made by the railroads concerning the necessity of this rate increase because they were going to bear the cost of these new cars and with respect to the misleading information that no significant increases had occurred before the two which were to be announced for this fall and for next January, has the minister taken steps to correct that seriously misleading information provided by the railroads, and can he give us some information because of the urgency of having some decision made in terms of having these cars available for next year's season?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I had a discussion with my officials this morning, and we discussed this very topic. As I said, we will be discussing it further with those of my colleagues who are concerned with this. I have very strong views on providing equipment, etc., and I realize the importance of having that rolling stock for this year's crop when it is harvested.

POTATOES—EFFECT OF SUPPLYING ROLLING STOCK TO RAILROAD ON RATE INCREASE

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister if the supplying of the rolling stock as proposed by him will be enough assistance to the railroad that it will be able to withdraw any request for any increase in rate whatsoever for the forthcoming season.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, that depends on the progress we make on my submission.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON RESULTS

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Acting Prime Minister. I believe the Acting Prime Minister has just returned from an extremely important conference in Paris known, I think, as the North-South Conference in which trade relations between the developed and the developing world were discussed. I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister if he will make a statement to this House on the outcome of the conference and on any obligations Canada might assume as a result of the conference.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gillies: Why are you applauding? It was a failure.

Mr. MacEachen: The Conference on International Economic Co-operation in Paris has concluded. Twenty-seven nations