

Oral Questions

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Don't say "No", because it is "Yes". They do not make money on them and they are much more interested at this moment in flying south with charter planes than in operating short-haul flights. However, I shall inquire into this. I do not know where the hon. member got his information but I will read what Mr. Pratt said and try to understand what he has in mind.

* * *

TRANSPORT

FREIGHT RATE INCREASES IN WESTERN CANADA—
GOVERNMENT ACTION TO COUNTERACT—REQUEST FOR
POLICY STATEMENT

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. The railways have increased their freight rates on certain products by 30 per cent since the Western Economic Opportunities Conference took place, at which time the federal government expressed support for a policy favouring the rapid growth of secondary industry and, more particularly, the processing of western Canadian resources. I wonder whether the hon. gentleman feels these increases in freight rates are in keeping with the spirit of that conference. Is he about to come up with a policy which will give effect to the views which were put forward on behalf of the government on that occasion?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): This is, of course, a general question and it should really be answered in the course of a debate on the Transportation Act of 1967. The hon. member talks about the movement of natural resource products. He knows this comes under what we call agreed rates between the producers and the railways. If the shippers and the railways agree on certain rates, they are free to do so under the law as it stands.

Mr. Korchinski: A supplementary question to the Prime Minister. Certain reclassification procedures and changes in the freight rate structure in Western Canada have meant an increase of 500 per cent in the rates charged on certain commodities. I would remind the House that at the Western Economic Conference the Prime Minister expressed deep concern that "so many gifted individual Westerners could feel so much discontent with their present and future prospects." He went on to say that the government has an obvious duty to identify the sources of frustration and to act to overcome them. I ask the Prime Minister whether he does not feel that ample time has now elapsed since that conference for positive action, and does he not think he should take it upon himself, if the Minister of Transport does not come up with a policy now, to remove the Minister of Transport and appoint someone who will bring in a policy?

● (1200)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Korchinski: I believe the Prime Minister has an obligation to the country to answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[Mr. Marchand (Langelier).]

[Translation]

INDUSTRY

TEXTILES—DATE OF REPORT OF TEXTILE AND CLOTHING
BOARD

Mr. Louis Duclos (Montmorency): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, I will direct my question to his parliamentary secretary.

Owing to the serious difficulties now encountered by the textile industry throughout Canada, especially in Quebec, could the parliamentary secretary advise the House whether the studies undertaken by the Textile and Clothing Board to determine the causes of the problems undermining that industry which employs 100,000 workers in Canada have been completed and, if so, when the minister will make public the reports of that board?

Mr. Gaston Clermont (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, a report has been received from the Textile and Clothing Board. The minister and his officials are now analyzing it and when they are through the minister will make a statement.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR REDUCTION IN
ALLOTMENT OF FUNDS TO HOUSING

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. In view of the low number of housing starts for the month of January—175,000 on a seasonally adjusted basis compared to the target of 210,000 that the minister speaks of—and in view of the government's housing priorities, which mean a drastic cut in the construction of housing for senior citizens and low income families, I should like to ask the Minister of Finance whether the decision with regard to the cut in housing construction was a decision of the Minister of Finance or the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. If it was the decision of the Minister of Finance, would he explain his reason for the decision?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I really do not know to which decision the hon. gentleman is referring. I can say only that there is legislation before the House with which we intend to deal as soon as the income tax bill is finished, which will allow us to meet the target that the Minister of State for Urban Affairs and I have set before the House.

Mr. Gilbert: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I could advise the Minister of Finance that the public housing estimates for Ontario have been cut from \$78 million to \$50.4 million, in co-operative housing from \$65 million to \$55.8 million, and in land assembly from \$55 million to \$35 million, which constitute drastic cuts. Is the Minister of Finance responsible for that decision and, if so, why?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, that is a flattering assumption but I should like to check it out.