

Inquiries of the Ministry

terminal elevators are only 50 per cent full a few short weeks before the opening of Great Lakes navigation?

Mr. Speaker: I am not quite sure the question is put in the correct terms, but in view of the importance of the matter the minister should be allowed to reply.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): At the last meeting in Winnipeg with the wheat transportation committee, the situation at the Lakehead was studied. A certain objective was assigned to the railways with respect to filling the elevator capacities at the Lakehead, and the two railways have assured me formally that this will be done on time before the opening of navigation.

Mr. McIntosh: As a supplementary question—and I might say to you, sir, this question is just as important as the fairs in Montreal or Toronto so far as national urgency is concerned.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. McIntosh: I ask the minister, in view of the fact that he mentioned the Winnipeg conference between the railway companies, was there a difference of opinion between himself, the self-appointed supervisor of this, and the railway officials, as to who was responsible for the fiasco that happened at Vancouver?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the hon. member that the supplementary as asked is argumentative.

Mr. McIntosh: Well, I will rephrase my question, Mr. Speaker. Was there a difference of opinion between the officials of the railways and the minister at Winnipeg late this week?

Mr. Pepin: I will say there was a good healthy debate on the subject between all parties represented at the Winnipeg meeting; but we, I think rightly, decided not to emphasize differences but to move forward with the solution to these problems.

Mr. McIntosh: Was it determined at that meeting who was responsible for this fiasco at Vancouver, with respect to the handling of grain?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member persists in asking questions in a way which is not in accordance with the practice in this house, and I would point out to him

[Mr. McIntosh.]

that I have to interpret the rules in the way that in my opinion they ought to be interpreted.

Mr. A. B. Douglas (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Now that spring has arrived in British Columbia can the minister assure us that grain unloadings by rail at Vancouver will meet our grain export requirements this spring?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, that is too complicated a question to be answered by a yes or no.

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): As a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, will the ships lying at anchor at the head of the lakes, which are now empty, be loaded in anticipation of the shipping season and, if so, when will this take place?

Mr. Pepin: This is part of the accepted objective, Mr. Speaker.

[Later:]

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, for several days we have been endeavouring to find out from the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce why box cars are not made available on C.P.R. lines. Did the president or one of the highest officials of the C.P.R. on the occasion that the minister met with him in the last few days say that the responsibility was that of the minister, because when wheat was not made available last fall the C.P.R. had many cars prepared to transport wheat?

Mr. Pepin: That is a debatable point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is what he said to you.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Forestry and Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, in response to questions asked yesterday I am happy now to announce that I expect to be able to sign the development agreement with Prince Edward Island on March 7, a week from today. I understand there were earlier reports of this from Charlottetown, but I should say that they were premature. For some time we have been aiming at that date but it was only this morning that I completed the negotiations that make it possible.