

[Translation]

TRANSPORT

MONTREAL—SHORTAGE OF BOX CARS FOR GRAIN MOVEMENT

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Maurice Allard (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a question to the Minister of Transport.

Could the minister tell the house if, following the instructions given to the railways by the board of transport commissioners to the effect that almost all empty cars be sent to western elevators, he has received numerous protests and whether he intends to do something to alleviate the shortage of cars at Montreal elevators?

[English]

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I cannot accept the premise of the hon. gentleman; therefore it would be impossible to answer the question.

LABOUR CONDITIONS

BELL ISLAND, NFLD.—ASSISTANCE TO UNEMPLOYED MINERS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Joseph P. O'Keefe (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister inform the house what steps are now being taken to deal effectively with the disastrous situation at Bell Island, which affects over 9,000 people?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, since the announcement was made that the mine would be closing at the end of June, throwing I think 800 or 900 people out of work at Bell Island, the government at once considered this as a matter not only of seriousness but of an emergency character, and has been in touch with the government of Newfoundland, other government agencies and the Atlantic Development Board. I hope to be in a position to give a more detailed reply to my hon. friend on Monday.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

ABSENCE OF MINISTERS AND SECRETARIES DURING ADJOURNMENT DEBATES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister. Is it now government policy not to have ministers or their parlia-

Inquiries of the Ministry

mentary secretaries present to answer queries that are raised in the ten o'clock adjournment debate? If not, will the Prime Minister impress upon his ministers the necessity to have someone present to answer questions on these occasions?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): So far as I am aware, Mr. Speaker, all ten o'clock questions have been effectively dealt with by the government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Not last night. There was no minister or parliamentary secretary here. It was just contempt of parliament.

Mr. Aiken: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State.

[Translation]

Mr. Albert Béchard (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I raise a point of order.

In the same connection, I was here last night to answer a question and the one who raised it was not. This has happened on two occasions in the case of the member for Gaspé (Mr. Keays).

[English]

Mr. J. R. Keays (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. member for Bonaventure refers to the evening of March 31 when I did not show up for the debate. Could I remind the hon. member that I was not informed, although I probably should have been in the house at six o'clock; but I did not take the advantage which one of his colleagues in the former parliament took, of circulating the same accusation throughout my riding, bearing in mind that this person is at present employed as a public servant—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, I had a supplementary question on the same subject. I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he will arrange in the future to extend to hon. members who raise questions on the adjournment motion the courtesy of seeing that a minister or a parliamentary secretary is here to answer the questions.

Mr. Pearson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Aiken: Last night no one was present to answer the question.