

Oral Questions

recommended increasing the supply of boxcars to Canadian industry since this has been a chronic problem for a number of years?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, if I may start with the last part of the question, Canadian National, the British Columbia Railway and Canadian Pacific ordered railway cars for lumber at the beginning of the year. Unfortunately delivery was not as expected because of strikes and other conditions, and it is impossible to lease any cars from the United States. Canadian Pacific succeeded in getting 300 cars, but that is all that are available on the market because in the United States there is a shortage. I hope I can meet with the railways on Thursday.

Mr. Mazankowski: Can the minister inform the House whether he has recommended a complete study of the availability and future need of boxcars, particularly the practice of the United States in holding boxcars in that country for some 45 days causing disruption in the movement of boxcars along with the much needed future expansion of boxcar allocation? Can the minister indicate whether he has recommended that the railways or his department undertake such study, in order that we might be able to overcome the critical and chronic shortage of boxcars in future years?

● (1450)

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, this is normally done each year. Last year they provided for an increase in activity of about 6 per cent. It is not unfortunate, but the increase in activity was 14 per cent and this is why there is a gap between forecasting and the situation now. At any rate, I am going to discuss these matters with them and hope to find a formula that will avoid a repetition of what is going on now.

BOXCARS FOR GRAIN—REQUEST FOR MEETING OF
RAILWAYS, WHEAT BOARD AND UNION
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggan): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the request the minister has had from the National Farmers Union to call a meeting of the railroads, the Canadian Wheat Board and the unions as well as others interested and involved, has he acceded to this request or will he do so, survey the total situation and come up with some answers?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I know that last Friday there was a meeting in Montreal between the representatives of the Wheat Board, under the auspices of the Minister of Justice, and the railways. I have not had any report on that. The Minister of Justice is not here. As for myself, I am going to meet with the railways on Thursday about the situation prevailing in British Columbia.

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for a last supplementary on this subject, and then recognize the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich.

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker, may I again ask the minister if he will broaden the scope of these meetings and ask not simply representatives of the grain groups and the railroads but involve all those people who have anything to contribute if we are to move grain? May I also ask him if he would persuade the minister in charge of the Wheat Board to quit politicking in western Canada and get back to his job?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich.

[Translation]

EFFECT OF FREIGHT RATES ON ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT—POSSIBLE FURTHER REGIONAL
CONFERENCES BETWEEN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND
PROVINCES

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a question of the right hon. Prime Minister.

In view of the promises that were made on January 4, in the Speech from the Throne, as regards national transport problems, and in view of the conference arranged in western Canada a few months ago to study the impact of railway freight rates on the economic growth of the west, could the right hon. Prime Minister tell us if he intends to set up soon other federal-provincial conferences in other parts of the country in order to study similar questions and to show the people of this country that these were not hollow promises?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member refers to the decisions that were taken during the western conference, he will see that the parties and the governments attending the conference decided to follow up with government policies in several ways, both by referring these problems to the Canadian Transport Commission and by providing for the review of transport problems by a standing committee that must report before the end of the year.

Other regions of this country were treated in a different way. The Minister of Transport held recent meetings with the Atlantic ministers of transport, about one month ago, if my memory serves me right. Therefore, as the hon. member may see, the government deals with problems in a way that is proper to every region.

[English]

REQUESTS FOR COMPLETION OF PLASTER ROCK-RENOUS
HIGHWAY AND MODERN ROAD BETWEEN FREDERICTON
AND SAINT JOHN

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Mr. Speaker, while we are on the same question of transportation may I direct a question to the Prime Minister. In view of repeated requests for federal assistance for the completion of the Plaster Rock-Renous highway in central New Brunswick and the building of a modern road between Fredericton and Saint John, New Brunswick, would the Prime Minister not pay too much attention to the corridor proposal through the state of Maine which is brought to his attention from time to time?