

well with my counterparts in the provinces. I believe there will be activity in most places within the next few weeks, but limited to that scope.

* * *

TRANSPORT

POSSIBLE BID-RIGGING IN SALVAGE AND DREDGING INDUSTRIES—INVESTIGATION IN "IRVING WHALE" CASE—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PROTECT PUBLIC INTEREST

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the Minister of Transport has stated outside the House that the government was alerted to the suspicion that bid-rigging might be going on in the salvage and dredging industries as a result of the *Irving Whale* case in 1971, what steps has he taken to determine what procedures were followed at that time to protect the public interest?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I asked the minister to investigate, which he did.

Mr. McGrath: Could I ask the Prime Minister when he asked the minister to investigate? Did the investigation satisfy the government that the contractual procedures followed in connection with dredging were such as to protect the public interest and that there were in fact no grounds for the suspicion the minister had enunciated?

Mr. Trudeau: As to the moment at which I discussed this matter with the minister, it was as soon as I learned about the possibility of a scandal there. The minister had already carried out an investigation at that time, and he showed me the results of that investigation on which he has commented in this House and outside.

Mr. McGrath: Can the Prime Minister determine for the House the date of the investigation? Was it at the time of the *Irving Whale* incident in 1971 or was it within relatively recent times when the minister made the statement?

Mr. Trudeau: The latter, Mr. Speaker.

POSSIBLE BID-RIGGING IN SALVAGE AND DREDGING INDUSTRIES—CONSULTATIONS WITH MINISTER OF JUSTICE IN 1971

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): I should like to ask the Minister of Transport whether he consulted with his colleague, the Minister of Justice, in 1971 to solicit his advice in assessing the legality of what was going on in dredging tender procedures?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): In 1971 I was not Minister of Transport.

Oral Questions

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF PATROL VESSELS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General; in his absence may I direct it to the Minister of Justice or to the acting minister? Can the minister inform the House whether it is the intention of the government to eliminate the service provided by the RCMP patrol vessels operating off the coast of the maritime provinces? If not, would he investigate and advise us?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): I will bring that question to the attention of the Solicitor General and ask him to report.

Mr. Muir: May I ask the hon. gentleman if, when he is working on this urgent and important matter, he will keep in mind that these RCMP patrol vessels, along with vessels from the Departments of Fisheries, Transport and other government departments form part of the search and rescue units of the Canadian Coastguard? Obviously, this duty cannot be carried out with 16-foot skiffs.

Mr. Lang: I think the Solicitor General is aware of the facts concerning the service provided.

* * *

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

MACKENZIE HIGHWAY—INQUIRY AS TO POSSIBLE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct this question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It relates to a statement of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in a letter to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior dated May 4, 1972 with respect to the construction of the Mackenzie Highway to ease the building of a pipeline.

In view of the fact that \$100 million has already been spent to date on construction of this highway, and bearing in mind recent statements by Canadian Arctic Gas, has the government reviewed its position with regard to this highway and, if so, would the hon. gentleman advise whether there has been any change in policy?

Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): We are currently reviewing the situation. When the original cost estimates for this highway were being put together we were looking at some \$60 million. We are now looking at estimates in excess of a quarter of a billion dollars. So we are currently examining the whole situation.