

Oral Questions

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. gentleman that there has been no abandonment of postal service in that community. There has been no punishment of this community.

● (1152)

As the hon. member knows, we have had some problems before with the Fort Hope post office and this time there was misappropriation of funds and we had to discontinue the operations of the post office. However, we did not discontinue the delivery of the mail. It has been flown there as usual. My people are supposed to meet with the band council of the Indians at Fort Hope to try to see if they could take care of the security of the mail and take on the operation of the post office themselves. So there is no abandonment of the mail. Deliveries are being made normally, and within the next ten days someone will be there to see what we can do in conjunction with the band council of Indians of this community.

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INDUSTRY**INCREASES IN PRICE OF ALUMINUM—MAINTENANCE OF ADEQUATE SUPPLY**

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce: it has to do with the domestically charged, Canadian-produced aluminum.

In light of the fact that some Canadian businesses involved in secondary manufacturing industry have had price increases of upwards of 26 per cent in the past year and yet cannot secure guarantees of continued adequate supply, will the minister investigate the situation to ensure that Canadian companies are not being treated unfairly and that jobs will not be lost to Canadians?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the difficulties in securing aluminum for Canadian companies, nor am I aware of the price increase. I will take the hon. member's question as notice and try to reply to him before the House reconvenes in the new year.

Mr. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. During recent weeks the demand for aluminum has increased dramatically due to a shortage on the American market.

Would the minister look into this possibility of price fixing and collusion among the major producers in this country, to guarantee that favouritism is not being shown to those manufacturing companies in which the primary producer has a vested interest?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I doubt whether the accusation in the question was accurate. I can say to the House and to you, Mr. Speaker, that Alcan has just announced a major expansion in their capacity for putting out aluminum and that might

[Mr. Penner.]

have some good effects on Canadian procurements. However, I will look into the whole matter and give the hon. member a reply.

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TRANSPORT**MEETING WITH PRAIRIE PROVINCES TO DISCUSS RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might have the attention of the Minister of Agriculture and the Acting Minister of Transport? I direct my first question to the Acting Minister of Transport, who will be aware of intense and grave concern on the prairies with respect to rail transportation.

At the time of the first ministers' conference a request was made by Premier Sterling Lyons to meet on January 5 and 6 with all transport representatives of the three prairie provinces. I ask the Acting Minister of Transport whether he is accepting that invitation; will he be meeting with them on those dates?

[Translation]

Mr. Charles Lapointe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the minister has not yet given a formal answer to that invitation, and he is very seriously considering doing so as soon as possible.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE**CARRIAGE OF PRAIRIES' AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE**

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, in light of the very grave and important situation of prairie rail transportation, could I ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he has accepted the invitation? Does he intend to be at that meeting with the prairie transport ministers with relation to the concerns that were expressed to him at the time of the first ministers' conference?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member knows the dates were just sent to us and, in addition, that this date was the date the meeting was to be called. We immediately responded and said that we had other commitments at that time. We suggested that any time after January 12 I believe, we would be ready and willing to meet, because I had a long-standing commitment.

We had cancelled the government trip to Israel in November, I believe it was, and that was the third time that trip had been cancelled. We had rearranged that I would leave on New Year's Day for Israel and return here on January 12. That trip is in conflict with the meeting, and I talked to the minister of agriculture in Manitoba about that. He told me at that time he did not see any difficulty in changing the date. I have not heard back from him yet. I believe we sent a telex to him