INCREASED SHIPMENTS THROUGH WEST
COAST PORTS

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): May I be allowed to say something cheerful, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: This may be out of order, but perhaps I should hear the minister.

Mr. Pepin: I have been sitting here, Mr. Speaker, hoping that somebody would do me the privilege of asking me whether transportation to the west coast is improving. It is. On the first occasion I attended the Transportation Committee in Vancouver on February 5 there were 22 ships waiting. Now there are only nine.

Mr. Hees: They got tired of waiting and went home.

Mr. Pepin: No, except for the two I have already acknowledged left in early February—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I realize the minister is anxious to give pleasant news but perhaps he should wait until the opportunity has arisen. If a question were asked—

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): The minister says things are improving as far as the box car situation is concerned. Mention was made of the Peace River area. I have from time to time drawn attention to the situation in northern Saskatchewan. Can the minister say whether he has made clear to the C.P.R. the fact that northern Saskatchewan is being discriminated against in this area served by the C.P.R. and that action should be taken in this regard?

Has the minister brought this situation to the attention of the railroad and pointed out the serious position in which farmers find themselves because they are unable to market any grain in certain areas of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Pepin: I believe I have already answered that question, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to look at this from the western point of view rather than from a local point of view, which I recognize is important too. I just wanted to say that the rate of unloading has been improving throughout the month—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wonder if we should not go onto another subject?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Is the right hon. gentleman rising to ask a supplementary question?

[Mr. Pepin.]

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am happy to see the minister so anxious to give his story about something else, but I ask him what he is doing about the situation in northern Saskatchewan except to issue statements full of hope and optimism.

Mr. Grant Deachman (Vancouver Quadra): Can the Minister of Trade and Commerce indicate to us whether there has been an improvement in the grain situation?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be more appropriate for the house to give consent to revert to motions, at which point the minister could make a statement?

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deachman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I was interrupted by the hon. member just as I was putting a question to the minister. My question has not been answered. May I have a reply to my simple question, as to whether or not there has been any improvement in the rate of grain shipments from the Port of Vancouver?

Mr. Pepin: I shall be brief, Mr. Speaker, and give two figures only with reference to grain unloadings on the west coast. In the first week of February the railways were unloading between 300 and 350 box cars a day. In the second week the number rose to 400 to 450. In the following week the average was 550, and this week, for three days, we have an average of 625 box cars unloaded on the west coast.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I call the attention of hon. members to the fact that if we spend too much time on the first one or two questions, some of our colleagues who do not sit in the first or second rows will be most unhappy because they have not had an opportunity to ask their questions. I would ask the co-operation of all hon. members in the hope that we can move on to the next subject.

PENSIONS

CONSIDERATION OF UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE OF
ESCALATION

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the