Inquiries of the Ministry

[*English*]

TRADE

SASKATCHEWAN PLAN TO BARTER WHEAT FOR MACHINERY

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): My question is directed to the Prime Minister. It has to do with the plan of the Premier of Saskatchewan to barter $300,000 worth of wheat for certain machinery. Has the government taken any stand against this course and, if it has, can we be told why the government of Saskatchewan should not be permitted to do something which would be beneficial to a small degree in diminishing the tremendous amount of wheat which is now piled up in that province?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I know that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has been talking to the premier of Saskatchewan and I believe he has reported briefly to the House on those talks. If the right hon. gentleman wishes to direct his question to the minister, I can say that he expects to be in the House tomorrow.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I ask the Prime Minister whether the Premier of Saskatchewan has been in touch with him in this regard and whether he has protested the attitude of the government in endeavouring to throw roadblocks in the way of the government of Saskatchewan in its endeavours to dispose of this wheat?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Waterloo.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister intend to sit and sulk like a petulant little boy while important questions of this nature are asked?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

EXEMPTION OF OLD ORDER MENNONITES

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): I wish to direct a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. It has to do with a reply the minister gave during an adjournment debate regarding the exemption of Old Order Mennonites from the Canada Pension Plan. On July 16 the minister indicated to me that this question had gone to the cabinet for consideration. May I ask whether a conclusion has yet been reached by the government and, if so, what that conclusion is?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): I expect to be in a position to announce government policy on this matter within approximately two weeks.

Mr. Saltsman: It was to be two weeks on the last occasion, on July 16; I hope the minister can assure us that this two weeks will be shorter than the last.

NAVIGATION

MACKENZIE RIVER—INQUIRY AS TO AGREEMENT WITH BRITISH COLUMBIA

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): My question is intended for the Minister of Public Works. It concerns the statement the minister made with regard to navigation on the Mackenzie River. Will he tell us whether the government is working toward obtaining an agreement with the government of British Columbia to protect downstream benefits, potential hydro development, navigation and wildlife?

Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Public Works): Because of the abnormal draw-down taken by British Columbia Hydro in August and September of 1968 we made representations and they restored, I think, 12,000 second-feet at that time. At the present time we are again making representations to the effect that while the area behind the dam is being filled, as much flow as possible is to be provided to the Mackenzie River.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): A supplementary question. Would the minister advise the House whether the government has not insisted, under the provisions of the Navigable Waters Protection Act, that British Columbia obtain a permit and enter into a proper agreement, so that the federal government does not have to go cap in hand every time that province wants to transgress in this regard?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think the question as asked by the hon. member has taken the form of an argument.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): With the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, this problem is not a simple one but one that is seriously affecting navigation and many other matters. It is a serious area problem, and I submit it is not sufficient simply to dismiss the question. The problem may be argumentative, but the question does require an answer.

Mr. Speaker: I am not dismissing the problem; it is the hon. member's question that I am dismissing.