

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think I can say at this moment that I will discuss this very soon with my colleagues. I have just come back from the west and I think I can make a report next week. I should like to have the reaction of my colleagues to this concept, which I am inclined to support entirely.

SHORTAGE OF RAILWAY CARS TO MOVE GRAIN AND LUMBER—RETURN OF CANADIAN CARS FROM UNITED STATES—REPAIR OF ROLLING STOCK

Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Transport. As there were some 15,500 Canadian railway boxcars on United States rail lines as of February 22 of this year and in view of the shortage of cars for the movement of grain and lumber, will the minister inform the House what action he has taken to get these boxcars back for the movement of Canadian products?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I feel it is a little bit too simple to say that because there are a certain number of American boxcars in Canada.

An hon. Member: How many?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I am not sure of the figures, and that is why I would be interested in having a monitoring system so that we can discuss not only suppositions but facts.

Mr. Knight: Mr. Speaker, I put it to the minister that there are half as many American cars in Canada as there are Canadian cars in the United States. As the government has put forward \$3.43 million to repair some 2,400 boxcars and as on February 22 there were 7,400 box cars in need of further repair, will the minister inform us if the railways have taken on the obligation of repairing the other 5,000 cars?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, the problem is to know—and I am not in a position to say—if it is worth while repairing certain cars. I have heard that the CNR alone has just placed a \$40 million order for cars and locomotives. Maybe it is preferable to buy brand new cars than to repair cars when it would be too expensive.

INQUIRY AS TO NEW NATIONAL POLICY—REFERENCE OF PROPOSALS TO COMMITTEE

Mr. Doug Neil (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. The minister mentioned that he has just returned from the west where I understand he had meetings with the four western provinces regarding a transportation policy. May I ask the minister what the general mechanism of this new policy will be, and will these proposals be put forward as soon as possible and referred to the appropriate standing committee?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think I mentioned last week that, after a statement is made in the House, it would be only honest for my colleagues to produce a formal paper. Before going further

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I have to have the approval of cabinet, which I do not have at this time. I hope I will get it so that we may follow the procedure the hon. member has indicated.

SHORT-TERM ACTION TO ENSURE MOVEMENT OF GRAIN BY RAILWAYS

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. As the minister in his statements today said that his proposals were long-term proposals, what short-term proposals is the minister able to put forward today in view of the fact that loaded grain cars are presently standing on sidings for as long as three weeks in the western prairies?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I know this. I saw the brief prepared by Mr. Atkinson. I want to check into these alleged facts. I have some people working on this. Maybe they are correct and maybe they are not. Let us not jump to conclusions before the facts are properly in. We have all kinds of shortages with regard to cars in Canada. I met with the premier of British Columbia, Mr. Barrett, in order to solve the problem between the British Columbia Railway and Canadian National and I hope that today we will have the answer. I have no global answer for all these questions. However, I think we are going to solve the problem of rail cars in Canada very shortly.

Mr. Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The minister questioned whether the statement I made was true. I should like to inform the minister that it is a fact that rail cars have been standing that long on sidings in western Canada.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Egmont.

CONTINUITY OF CNR FERRY SERVICE TO PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND IN THE EVENT OF FUTURE LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. I hope he will find it easy to answer because it is straightforward. It is with respect to the disruptive tie-up of the CNR ferry service to Prince Edward Island last summer during the rail strike. Can the minister report whether arrangements have now been completed with the government of Prince Edward Island guaranteeing continuity of ferry service by the CNR in light of the possibility of any future labour dispute?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I took this matter up with the premier of Prince Edward Island. I also asked for the co-operation of the Minister of Labour because there is the problem, too, of the unions involved. They have acquired rights. We want to know, if we change the system, what is going to happen to these men and if they are ready to co-operate with us in order to be sure that there will be no stoppage in future. All this is in the process of being done. I do not think anybody in the House would like to see the government, or the House, take a decision before the workers are sure their rights will be protected.