

mission system and the generation system for Gull Island. He responded very positively and I believe officials of the two governments are at this moment discussing an updated series of figures.

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INDUSTRY

FOOTWEAR—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PROVIDE PROTECTION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister in the absence of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. This question was asked of the Prime Minister. It relates to the serious situation which faces the footwear industry in Canada. If no action is taken by the government it is my understanding we can expect significant lay-offs. What steps is the government prepared to take in order to provide some protection for this industry which is certainly calling for leadership at this point from the federal authority.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Acting Prime Minister): I can tell the hon. member that this subject was discussed yesterday between the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce with his cabinet colleagues at which time attention was drawn to the problems mentioned by the hon. member. The matter is under consideration at the present time. Further meetings will be held between the government and representatives of the unions involved, and if and when any specific measures are to be taken I can assure the hon. member they will be made known to the House.

Mr. Alexander: I am glad to see that for a change the government is on the ball. Would the minister advise us whether the government has ruled out the type of steps which were taken in order to protect the textile industry? Are we moving in that direction in order to protect the shoe industry?

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member has drawn attention to the effective action which was taken by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce with respect to the textile industry.

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. MacEachen: Comparable problems are being experienced by other industries in the country. The hon. member will realize, of course, that though similar measures may be needed to deal with the problems he has in mind, that is not necessarily the situation. But measures are under consideration.

● (1450)

Mr. Alexander: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Acting Prime Minister will be meeting with representatives concerned with this problem. Can he give me any idea when he believes that these meetings will have concluded in order that an announcement can be made in

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this House as to what steps the government will be taking? Has he a deadline in this regard?

Mr. MacEachen: No, Mr. Speaker. The meetings referred to are meetings to take place between the trade unions and the Minister of Labour within a matter of days.

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TRANSPORT

WEST COAST FERRIES—IMBALANCE OF SUBSIDIES FOR EAST AND WEST COAST SERVICES

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. On February 11 the Prime Minister, in reply to a question of mine concerning subsidies for west coast ferries, took notice of the question on behalf of the Minister of Transport. The Prime Minister had said on December 22 that "there is an element still to be decided" concerning the west coast ferry subsidies. Can the Minister of Transport tell us if that element, whatever it is, has been decided and is the government now prepared to bring some equity into the method of subsidizing ferries on our coasts?

Hon. Otto. E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, we are having further discussions with the province of British Columbia at this time on the whole question of our respective responsibilities and the role which can be played. We are doing so in a very co-operative spirit and I hope there will be some further developments in this regard within the next several weeks.

Mr. McKinnon: A supplementary question for the same minister, Mr. Speaker. The minister's estimates show a little over \$125 million for subsidization, directly or indirectly, of various ferry services on the east coast and nothing at all for west coast ferries. Are we to understand from that that the current inequities are to continue through to the next fiscal year?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, as has been made very clear, it is our objective to apply in an equitable fashion the policy in relation to water transport assistance and other programs in all parts of this country. It is toward that end that we have been working, both on the east and west coasts, as well as in other waterways. On the east coast, of course, there are two very exceptional services which have to be treated quite differently from any others because of their nature in terms of the constitutional arrangements which were made and which have to be taken fully into account.