

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Drew: Yes, I think they should be called.

Mr. Speaker: Then, with the consent of the house, I shall do so.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Agreed.

QUESTION PASSED AS ORDER FOR RETURN

EROSION ON LAKE ERIE

Mr. Coyle:

1. Has any investigation been made into methods and means of preventing erosion on lake Erie by reason of the decay of the east pier at Port Bruce, Ontario?

2. If not, will the government give consideration to taking steps designed to stop the effects of erosion and to remove the cause?

NEWFOUNDLAND

R.C.A.F. TRANSPORT ON SPECIAL FLIGHT FROM ST. JOHN'S TO GANDER

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the opposition asked me yesterday if any further information had been obtained about a certain flight of an R.C.A.F. plane from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Gander in November last. I told him I understood that the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Lapointe), acting as Minister of National Defence at that time, had prepared a note which I had seen at the time. I said I would endeavour to secure it and communicate it to the house. It is in the following form:

In replying to the question asked by the leader of the opposition, regarding R.C.A.F. transport provided to assist the Newfoundland government, the Prime Minister on November 26 undertook to obtain further information which I am now in a position to give. As outlined by the Prime Minister, it is the general policy to be of service to provincial governments in instances of urgency and need where other means of transport are not available, but, in cases which would not normally fall under the heading of search and rescue operations, the provincial government concerned is normally asked to reimburse national defence out-of-pocket expenses incurred.

When this matter was brought to my attention on Thursday evening,—

That would be Thursday, November 22.

—it was not possible to communicate by telephone with either Premier Smallwood or the R.C.A.F. officer in command at St. John's. After reviewing the circumstances of the request and taking into consideration the assurances of the premier of Newfoundland that no civilian transport could be obtained, that this flight was urgent and that the flight involved transportation of a government official—not a politician—I felt that it might not be fair to throw upon a subordinate air force officer the responsibility for making what was essentially a ministerial decision, and I authorized the flight to be made on the basis of reimbursement in the usual manner of our out-of-pocket expenses.

Had it been possible to speak to the premier of Newfoundland, I would have ascertained precisely what the exact purpose of the flight was before making a decision.

I have since been advised the only passenger was one employee of the government who went to Gander and that no passenger arranged for by the Newfoundland government returned in the plane.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I recognize the difficulty with which the Prime Minister would be confronted in dealing with a matter of that kind and of necessity accepting the explanation that was given, but in view of the event that was anticipated a few days later in Newfoundland I do suggest that further examination will indicate that this was a rescue operation of a kind not ordinarily included in the term "search and rescue operation".

TRADE

STRATEGIC CHEMICALS—REPORTED SHIPMENTS TO HUNGARY

On the orders of the day:

Mr. G. J. McIlraith (Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I should like to answer a question which was asked yesterday by the leader of the opposition with regard to the alleged shipment of strategic chemicals to Hungary. The question was as follows:

I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) or to whoever can speak for him in this matter. There has been an extensive discussion in the press of the charge made by the commerce department of the United States that the Continental Pharma Company of Montreal has been secretly exporting strategic chemicals to communist Hungary. I should like to ask what information the government can give us about this matter and what steps have been taken, from the point of view of the Canadian government, to deal with this situation.

In answer may I say that officials of the Department of Trade and Commerce have been in close touch with officials of the office of international trade of the United States department of commerce for some time in connection with this matter. The grounds for the proceedings by the United States authorities against A. E. Ratner Chemical Company of New York, Continental Pharma Company of Montreal, and the Continental Pharma Company of Brussels, involved one shipment of aluminum oxide, abrasive grade. This shipment was made direct from the United States to Belgium in May, 1949, and it is reported that it was forwarded from Belgium to Hungary.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police examined the books of the Continental Pharma Company in Montreal in May, 1950, and from the evidence available there apparently was no infraction of the Canadian export control regulations involved in this shipment of aluminum oxide from the United States to Hungary. Since that time the export operations of this company have been closely