

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, the question is very interesting and quite appropriate. I intend to discuss it seriously with the President of the Treasury Board at the first opportunity and we will see how to proceed next year, that is, whether or not we should further extend the courtesy given to the press.

Personally I am inclined to extend the privileges of hon. members as much as possible. But what we had to debate yesterday was whether in the present context and according to the established practice there was a breach of the privileges or a lack of courtesy based on tradition. You have made your ruling, Madam Speaker, and we accept it.

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[English]

MARINE TRANSPORT**REMOVAL OF DART CONTAINERLINE COMPANY FROM PORT OF HALIFAX**

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport who is responsible for marine transport and for the Canadian National Railways. The minister knows that there are published reports that Dart Containerline is terminating its operation in the port of Halifax, and removing its multimillion dollar business to the port of Montreal. Is the minister aware of this proposed change, and what does he propose to do about the loss of thousands of jobs at the port of Halifax, in direct and indirect employment, and the loss of millions of dollars of revenue, not to mention the \$18 million loss to the CNR arising from the discontinuation of this service?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, this news is supposed to be confirmed this afternoon by the company, and, indeed, it will be a very bad announcement as far as the port of Halifax is concerned. The Dart company has decided to move container traffic from Halifax to Montreal. Again, this is a very severe blow. I agree with that. However, one would take into consideration, nevertheless, that the containers going for the Atlantic market, will not be moved, and that represents about 15 per cent of the traffic.

A second announcement which I want to make at the same time is that the Polish line is going to use terminal two in Halifax and that will represent 200,000 tons, beginning Saturday. So, there are some compensating factors, and no doubt, Ceres and Halterm will look for more traffic in the coming days.

Mr. Crosby: The minister must know that the ameliorating factors that he mentioned are not connected. The Polish line was already due to come to the port of Halifax, and the local traffic cannot go anywhere else but Halifax because of economic considerations. But I have warned the minister in the House, and elsewhere, of the involvement of CNR in Cast, and it is at the root of this problem.

Will the minister now explain why the CNR refused to become involved in Dart's operation at the same time that they were becoming involved in Cast's operation, but benefiting the port of Montreal to the detriment of the port of Halifax?

Mr. Pepin: The CNR is involved in Cast indeed, but the CNR is also involved in Halterm. There was a time when CNR wanted to get involved in Dart, and was not allowed to do so. But the main reason for this move comes from CP. CP operates from Montreal with smaller ships. It wanted to get bigger ships, and that is the main reason why the transfer of traffic was made from Halifax to Montreal.

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LABOUR RELATIONS**WHITE PASS AND YUKON RAILWAY DISPUTE—QUERY RESPECTING EFFORTS TO SETTLE**

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The minister will have been alerted, by his alert staff, I am sure, that the rail workers of White Pass and Yukon route went on strike last night despite the recommendations of a conciliation officer.

What steps is the government now taking through his own ministry, or through the Ministry of Labour, or any agency of government, to restore the services of this singular and most vital link to tide water, which transports all of Yukon products out and most of Yukon supplies in?

● (1500)

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows this is the direct responsibility of my colleague, the Minister of Labour. As a result of the concerns of many in the Yukon as well as those expressed by the hon. member himself, the Minister of Labour has taken a very active interest in this matter. Certainly his officials and some of the key officials with long experience in trying to resolve strikes, especially Mr. Kelly, the assistant deputy minister of labour, have gone into the matter thoroughly and made the parties aware that the services of some of the most experienced mediators in the country, in my view, are available to try to resolve this strike. I can only hope that the offer of assistance and the resolve on the part of the Department of Labour will be effective in settling this strike.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Speaker, can the minister inform us whether there is included in his current estimates sufficient funds to enable him to go forward with his publicly announced \$5 million support for the railroad?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Yes, Madam Speaker. I think the hon. member would agree that it is very much in the interests of all Yukoners that this money be made available. As he knows, this is for capital projects which are badly