

been done in the case of uranium, coal, butter and other commodities—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: And eggs!

Mr. Muir:—thereby providing employment for unemployed steel workers in Cape Breton?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian National only looks elsewhere for rails when there are good reasons for doing so. There were some overcapacity problems not too long ago. Following visits from steel workers and the representations from my colleague, the President of the Privy Council, I had meetings with Canadian National. As a result of those meetings, discussions with the steel plant took place and orders for rails were accelerated with Canadian National agreeing to take the rails earlier. They have been doing just that and stockpiling them for use later in the year.

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HOUSING

POSSIBILITY OF MORTGAGE DEFAULTS UNDER ASSISTED HOME OWNERSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Dean Whiteway (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs and relates to the government's Assisted Home Ownership Program. In view of the fact that the AHOP program is based on the assumption that real family incomes will rise over the long term, and in view of the fact that there is economic uncertainty in Canada, is the minister aware of the possibility that there will be large scale mortgage defaults after the interest-reducing loan becomes due at the end of the five-year period?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker.

● (1500)

Mr. Whiteway: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, for the same minister also having to do with the AHOP program. In view of the fact that observers close to the financial markets of this country are predicting real difficulty—I think the minister is aware of this—and due to the ballooning which will take place five years from now when these loans become due, would the minister at least be prepared to concede that CMHC may not only have to maintain the subsidies but in fact have to assume those mortgage payments altogether?

[Translation]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, the only thing I can tell the hon. member is that this program is very popular in Canada and that it allowed a few thousand Canadians to acquire 38,000 new housing units in Canada; I should think those people do not share the concerns of the hon. member.

[English]

Oral Questions

LABOUR CONDITIONS

IMPLEMENTATION OF HALL REPORT ON RAILWAY PENSION PLANS—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Labour concerning the report of Dr. Noel Hall on Canadian railway pension plans. In view of the fact that very little has been done about this report, and particularly in view of the fact that nothing will be done to improve the pensions of those already retired unless some initiative is taken by the government, can the minister say whether the government is considering taking an initiative on behalf of those retired railway employees?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is quite accurate to say that nothing has been done with respect to the Noel Hall report. As the hon. member is aware, the report directly aims its remarks at the CPR, which is a private corporation. I have talked to some leaders of the railway unions and this is going to be a very serious subject at the bargaining table during the current negotiations. What flows from it may very well have implications for the pensioners already retired to whom the hon. member refers.

SUGGESTION PENSION FUNDS BE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION BY UNIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, for the Minister of Labour. Surely the minister agrees that the CPR, or any other railway or corporation running a private pension fund, should be directed by legislation to make the pension fund available for inspection by the unions? This does not have to wait for other people. Why does the government not act on this part of the Noel Hall report?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, that is an area that we may very well look into.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Before some hon. members get too excited about the situation, if my interpretation is right, I believe it is the feeling of the union leadership, at least those to whom I have talked, that they would prefer the matter now to rest in their hands in the free collective bargaining system, and they are assured that they can do rather well, better perhaps than a lot of the rest of us.

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[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MR. LAMBERT (BELLECHASSE)—ALLEGED BIAS OF RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege in connection with a matter of utmost