

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Isnor: Perhaps the minister would be good enough to give it later.

Mr. Graydon: Why not tell us yourself?

Mr. Gillis: Will the minister say whether in his opinion, in view of the statement he has just made, a 25 per cent reduction in train services in the maritimes was necessary, having in mind the fact that plenty of coal was available there to provide the service?

Mr. Chevrier: My hon. friend bases his question on the assumption that there was plenty of coal.

Mr. Gillis: The provincial government said so.

Mr. Chevrier: I am telling my hon. friend now that according to the information I have in my possession, emanating from Canadian National Railway sources, there was not available in the maritime region all the coal that they hoped to get. They are receiving full co-operation from the maritime region at the moment, and are taking all the coal they can obtain; but that did not always prevail.

As to why the reduction in service was carried out all over Canada, the Canadian National management thought—and I am of the opinion as well—that the fair thing to do was apportion the reduction in all parts of Canada. If that had not been done the transcontinental trains probably would not be operating.

Mr. Coldwell: In view of the circumstances I should like to know whether the government and the railways will give consideration to the greater utilization of Canadian coal and oil in the operation of our railway systems.

Mr. Chevrier: My hon. friend raises quite an important point. As he probably knows, it has been the policy of the Canadian National to change from coal-burning to oil-burning locomotives in western Canada. I think the hon. gentleman knows that in all British Columbia and in parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan, oil is used exclusively. It would take about six months to convert from oil to coal. In an emergency situation such as this, consideration could not be given to that action. In eastern Canada, by which I mean the central region, the same situation would obtain if we had to convert from coal to oil; it would take several months. The Canadian National had to come to a decision quickly when this emergency position developed, and in the circumstances I think it took the logical and best decision.

Mr. Graydon: If I might impose upon the minister by asking one other question, can

he tell us what proportion of the coal used by the Canadian National is mined in Canada and what proportion is mined in the United States?

Mr. Chevrier: I do not think I can answer that question accurately, other than to say that some 19 million tons of coal are produced in this country, of which some 6,500,000 tons coming from the maritime region and 5 million tons coming from the western region can be used for railway purposes. In the past it has been the policy of the Canadian National Railways to get coal for the central region from United States sources, because they were closer. To haul coal all the way from Nova Scotia to western Ontario is not a profitable enterprise. But the Canadian National have tried to buy all the Canadian coal they could; and, following the policy of the government in curtailing expenditures in the United States, in the recent past they have been looking toward a greater consumption of Canadian coal.

Mr. Graydon: Perhaps the minister would give us the percentages later?

Mr. Chevrier: I shall be glad to do so.

COMBINES INVESTIGATION ACT**INQUIRY AS TO APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSIONER**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Will the Minister of Justice say how soon an announcement will be made concerning the appointment of someone to fill the post of commissioner under the Combines Investigation Act?

Hon. Stuart S. Garson (Minister of Justice): I can give an estimate, Mr. Speaker. I would say in about one week.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**CHINESE NATIONALIST BLOCKADE**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. G. R. Pearkes (Nanaimo): Has the Secretary of State for External Affairs been advised of the blockade the Chinese national government claims to have established in relation to certain portions of the Pacific ocean adjacent to China? If so, have Canadian shipping interests been advised of the dangers their vessels may encounter in traversing those waters?

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Secretary of State for External Affairs): We have been advised of that situation, and Canadian shipping companies have been informed of it.