

Oral Questions

into some financial jeopardy and will mean the loss of some \$37 million to Canadian taxpayers. Would the minister agree that a full and independent public inquiry should be held to investigate the reasons for this collapse particularly in view of the tremendous infusion of public funds? Could the minister also assure the House that Northern Electric will not be allowed to apply the losses incurred by Microsystems against their profits until the completion of such an independent inquiry and the presentation of its report to parliament? Finally, in view of the importance of this industry to Canada and our present necessity of relying completely on the United States for semi-conductors, would the minister inform the House whether there are any plans to initiate a new industry in this country and if so, what they are?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, there is more than one question there and I shall do my best to answer as quickly as I can. The department supported the Microsystems project because according to the best advice then available, the company seemed to have a technically advanced product in process. Considerable sums of money were advanced in support of this product over a period of years and there was every evidence that it was technically up to standard internationally. Unfortunately, during the last couple of years there has been a major shift in international markets for that product, the result of which the hon. member is now aware. I do not think an inquiry would serve any useful purpose. This is an example of market forces combining against this project.

As members will realize, when you get into advanced technology you are getting into a risk business, and there are going to be failures. We have had successes and very few failures to date. As to losses on that particular enterprise and whether those losses may be used to offset profits earned by the parent company, I think this question should be directed to the Minister of National Revenue.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS**REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF VETERANS LAND ACT—
GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. I received an answer on the order paper yesterday which indicated that, as a result of the extension of the Veterans Land Act, 7,648 applications were approved between January 1974 and January 1975. This is evidence which contradicts what the minister said last year, that the Veterans Land Act had outlived its usefulness. Apart from the new veterans housing legislation, and because the decision on the extension of the Veterans Land Act was justified, would the minister consider continuing it as it is so popular?

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of government policy and there is no indication of it at this time.

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

Mr. Marshall: A supplementary question. Contrary to the statement made last year that operational expenditures would be increased by \$50 million, the annual report indicates that the operating expenditure was reduced by \$741,000 and that \$53.6 million was collected on capital account besides \$26.3 million in interest, so would the minister take these figures into consideration and have discussions with his colleagues before March 31, 1975 with a view to extending the Veterans Land Act?

Mr. MacDonald (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to look at the figures and give them some consideration.

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PUBLIC SERVICE**STRIKE OF GENERAL LABOUR AND TRADES GROUP—
PROPOSED NEGOTIATION OF ARRANGEMENT TO PERMIT
FOOD SHIPMENTS TO NEEDY COUNTRIES**

Mr. Leonard C. Jones (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Has he or any member of the cabinet met with, or would they consider meeting with, representatives of the Public Service Alliance to attempt to negotiate, strictly on a moral basis, at least some temporary arrangement so that food shipments destined to certain foreign countries in desperate need of food can proceed unimpeded?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board is now engaged in negotiations and I think there are improved prospects for success. I understood the motivation of the hon. member's suggestion but I do not think it would be advisable to put it forward at the present time.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORT**FERRY SERVICE—POSSIBLE TRANSFER OF HARBOUR
FACILITIES TO PROVINCE OF QUEBEC**

Mr. Charles Lapointe (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a question to the Minister of Transport.

Could he tell the House whether officials of his department have had formal meetings recently with officials of the provincial transport department to discuss the whole question of the transfer of ferry wharfs to the province and, if so, has a schedule been established so that these wharfs may be repaired and transferred to the province as soon as possible?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I know there have been meetings and contacts. I shall be able to give details on the dates of the meetings and the results of the talks tomorrow morning.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) on a question of privilege.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege deals with the answer which the Minister of Consumer