

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Blais: Ten o'clock.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

EXPORT OF POTASH

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of State for International Trade. I should like to ask why, with our present trade deficit and with our huge surplus of potash—sufficient to supply the world for hundreds of years—and with Premier Blakeney touring the world to promote the sale of potash, it was that when Taiwan needed potash we did not submit a tender?

Was it because of our transportation system; was it because of the Saskatchewan government takeover resulting in curtailed production; or was it because of the political question—and I hope not—that Canada did not want to supply Taiwan and offend mainland China?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of State for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I very much thank the hon. member for giving me notice of this question. It is not the position of the Government of Canada to respond to a tender call with respect to this particular product. We are not in that business. As the hon. member knows, we do not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan and that does inhibit us in some way from responding, however, our companies can respond to tender calls.

I should also say that in the area of potash, Canada has been a major supplier to Taiwan over the years, supplying something like three-quarters of their requirements. As far as I am concerned, I hope that we will continue to do so. I have attempted to get in touch with the Canpotex people to find out whether there are any other reasons. I have not yet received an answer, but I will continue to seek one.

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TRANSPORT

FERRY SERVICE BETWEEN NEWFOUNDLAND AND MAINLAND

Mr. Fouse Faour (Humber-Port-Au-Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. It concerns the ferry service between Newfoundland and the mainland, which has been the subject of quite a few complaints for some time, both in letters to myself and to other members of Parliament, having regard to crowded vessels, poor and uncomfortable facilities for passengers.

Since the federal government has a responsibility under the Terms of Union with Canada to provide a good ferry service to the province, I should like to ask the minister why the government and CN Marine have not custom-built a ship for the service since the mid-1950s; and, further, why consideration has not been given, or why there has not been implementation

Oral Questions

in the service of new technology such as hydrofoils or hovercraft.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. This is something that has been considered by my office, myself personally and by the president of CN Marine. We did have occasion to meet a week or ten days ago, when we discussed those very points the hon. member has raised. The hon. member has raised them in personal letters to me, and I want to assure him that the representations he has advanced in his letters and in the House here today will be treated accordingly.

Mr. Faour: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's remarks and I hope that the future service reflects his concern today. The area manager for CN Marine has stated, as one of the reasons for not providing better facilities on the new ferries to be constructed, that the company is not in the hotel business.

Does the minister accept this statement as justification for providing an inferior service in the Gulf and, if he does not, what steps is he prepared to take to ensure comfortable facilities for travellers on long night crossings or on potentially long winter crossings when ice can cause undue delays?

Mr. Mazankowski: As I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, it is those kinds of questions which we have been discussing with the president of CN Marine. He has given me a commitment to respond to representations such as those the hon. member has made. Perhaps at some appropriate time I might have an occasion to respond specifically to the questions raised when I receive a response from the president of CN Marine with regard to these very important matters.

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NORTHERN AFFAIRS

SETTLEMENT OF ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIM

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Will he say whether it is correct that he is going to cabinet shortly—and I have heard November 19 mentioned—with proposals affecting the COPE aboriginal claim settlement? If that is correct, is he going to ask cabinet to approve the agreement in principle as signed by the previous minister, or will he be proposing changes to that claim?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, having regard to the COPE agreement, the hon. member will recognize that an agreement in principle was signed approximately a year ago—in October last—with a target date having been established to have a final agreement settled by October 31 of this year.

I have received a number of representations from various native groups in the Northwest Territories, as well as representations from members of this House requesting me to review the COPE agreement. Having regard, specifically, to the hon. member's question as to whether I will present this to cabinet