

Oral Questions

breakdown, or followed with a breakdown in negotiations, seem to far exceed the guidelines imposed by the Anti-Inflation Board, and in view of the fact there is in essence no free collective bargaining because the Anti-Inflation Board is the final arbiter, is it the intention of the government through an industrial commissioner or a conciliation board to inform the union of the parameters within which they have to negotiate under the constraints laid down by the Anti-Inflation Board?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Acting Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has suggested exactly what I suggested two days ago. When and if an industrial commissioner or a conciliation board is set up, the chairman or the individual might want to inform or discuss with the Anti-Inflation Board the parameters of the wage settlement. We are talking about free collective bargaining, and certainly in the case of the railways we are talking of hundreds of clauses that are non-monetary, and in many cases more important than the monetary matters which must be settled outside the Anti-Inflation Board. Certainly the Anti-Inflation Board imposes a restraint but does not eliminate collective bargaining, because in theory some fair settlements could be substantially lower than the parameters set by or acceptable to the Anti-Inflation Board.

THREATENED STRIKE OF RAILWAY EMPLOYEES—POSSIBLE
DETERMINATION BY LABOUR RELATIONS COUNCIL OF
ESSENTIALITY OF RAIL SERVICE

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but admire the minister's optimism, but since we seem to be heading for a national rail stoppage because of the government's head-in-the-sand attitude toward the situation, and because of the essentiality of rail services to the economy of this country, may I ask the Acting Minister of Labour whether the Canada Labour Relations Council, which is empowered to study specific proposals, has been asked to make a determination as to whether rail services are essential to the national economy, and if such designation or such finding by the Canada Labour Relations Council, which I understand is meeting today, will be made public?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Acting Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I do not think we need the council's advice in order to reiterate that rail services are essential to this country. The question is, how essential are they and when does any particular labour dispute become so dangerous to the economy there must be an intervention. The point is, the hon. gentleman is talking about a strike as if it were inevitable when in fact the normal process of the law has not even begun. There has yet to be the conciliation stage or the commissioner stage, or mediation. What the hon. gentleman is doing is reflecting the usual cynicism he reflects everytime collective bargaining is discussed and anticipating the results of collective bargaining which has yet to begin.

● (1420)

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

GUATEMALA—REQUEST OF MONTREAL GROUP FOR FIELD
HOSPITAL TO AID EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister. On Monday in the House both the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Minister of National Defence indicated the government was doing all it could to help the unfortunate people in Guatemala at the time. I should like to ask the Acting Prime Minister a question concerning a request made of the government for a civil defence field hospital providing some 200 beds. Could the Acting Prime Minister confirm that such a request was made sometime ago to the government by Dr. Cohn of Montreal supported by OXFAM Canada, and could he confirm also that the government has not yet accepted that request; if not, would he explain to the House the reason?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government did receive such a request. It has been re-examined in conjunction with the particular agencies which have responsibility in this area and my colleague the Secretary of State for External Affairs will give a full reply.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is not true that medical supplies have been held up by the government because of red tape as has been suggested in the newspapers. The need at the moment in Guatemala is for cash, food, milk powder and orthopedic equipment. Yesterday the Guatemalan consulate in Montreal issued a statement on clear instruction from the Guatemalan national emergency co-ordinating committee that no further medical assistance could be handled at the present time. A subsequent request was made to the Canadian government to hold any further preparations for sending medical teams either official or voluntary until authorization has been received from Guatemala. The plain fact is we are ready to assist in any way possible as we have been doing but at the moment the advice from the Guatemalan authorities and from the League of Red Cross Societies is that it would be counter-productive at the present time to send in further medical teams.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, that part of the answer I say seriously is reassuring, but concerning the specific request for this field hospital of some 200 units, which I understand has support from OXFAM Guatemala and from Guatemala at the appropriate time, I should like to ask the minister if the government is prepared to accede to the request in principle that this unit will be provided when they are able in fact to incorporate it in their plans in Guatemala.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, I believe I can give the assurance to the House that if the Guatemalan authorities and the League of Red Cross Societies indicate that additional medical teams or hospital equipment are required or could be utilized at the moment we would bend every effort to make that available. I can give the hon. member that assurance, but we have discussed the generous volun-