

of committees to look at urgent measures that can be taken to use more fully the lines that are clear. Our objective is to move the grain on to the main lines, and then have the fastest possible turnaround of rail equipment in order to make up the hypothetical potential losses—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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LABOUR RELATIONS

DISPUTE BETWEEN SEAFARERS' UNION AND LAKE CARRIERS ASSOCIATION—INTERVENTION BY MINISTER—SUGGESTED VOLUNTARY ARBITRATION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Labour. It appears from a question asked previously by the NDP that the minister is now thinking about introducing back to work legislation. We have not had a report from the minister, and since April 1 is the deadline would the minister advise what is the situation at the present time and whether he still believes it is a little premature to make a personal intervention?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I would advise the House that I have been in discussion with the parties to this dispute, both directly and indirectly, in an effort to try to resolve it. It is a difficult situation. I am going to continue to intervene, along with the assistance of my officials, in an endeavour to try to resolve the dispute before April 1 if at all possible.

Mr. Alexander: For the last month or so the minister has been extolling the virtues of voluntary arbitration. Can the minister advise the House whether this suggestion has been put to the parties to the dispute and have they accepted it or what was their answer? If he has not done so, why has he not done so?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the question of voluntary arbitration in the context which I have been advancing for some months is with particular reference to the railway unions. Their collective agreement does not expire till the end of December and it was hoped that this would be a method by which we could avoid labour disputes in the future. With regard to the present situation, a dispute is already in progress. The collective agreement has been terminated and, technically speaking at least, there is a strike in operation. Whether the parties will agree to go back to work without a settlement, leaving the details of the settlement to voluntary arbitration, I would doubt.

[Later:]

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, I have a further supplementary question in view of the importance of this matter. The minister made an assumption that the parties to the dispute would not go along with voluntary arbitration. Would the minister give the House an assurance that he will take this matter up with the parties so that he can have a definite answer yes or no whether they find this

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new and unique procedure acceptable, keeping in mind the extreme urgency of the situation?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the extreme urgency of the situation, but it was not an assumption that led me to that conclusion. In view of the discussions that I have had with the parties involved, it is obvious to me that the parties would not be agreeable to voluntary arbitration, particularly one party to the dispute.

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FINANCE

SUGGESTED REMOVAL OF SALES TAX ON WATER MAIN MATERIALS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Finance. Having regard to the fact that many Canadian municipalities have experienced a substantial increase in population due to the installation of numerous municipal services, and noting that provincial governments—Ontario, for example—have waived the sales tax on water main materials, would the minister consider removal of the discriminatory payment of federal sales tax on water main materials for municipalities?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I will take note of the hon. gentleman's representation, which has been echoed in several quarters of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to bring to the attention of hon. members that we have now come to the end of the question period. The Chair will allow the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka a supplementary and then we will call orders of the day.

Mr. Darling: Noting that many municipalities have approved a resolution calling for the exemption from the federal sales tax of water main materials, would the minister attend the meeting of the Ontario Municipal Water Association in Windsor from April 28 to May 1 in order to participate in constructive discussions regarding this matter?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I have not been invited, but before I am it may be a little tough to make that meeting.