

Oral Questions

given notice. On Saturday Mr. Dennis McDermott, director of United Auto Workers, reversed the position he took in January and said that a general strike is a distinct possibility. However, he went on to warn against any rash action. In view of the fact that an illegal national strike might prove to be not only rash but in the long run work against labour's legitimate aspirations, can the minister tell the House, first, whether he or his officials now believe a national strike is a real possibility and, second, what steps if any the minister has taken to persuade the CLC to avoid this kind of confrontation, not just with the government but with the Canadian public?

• (1410)

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, to answer the last part of the hon. member's question first, what we are doing is having ongoing discussions with labour bilaterally and with the national organization itself as well as with the Canadian public generally and the rank and file generally. As to whether I should conjecture with regard to a general strike being a possibility, I do not believe that would be particularly helpful at this time. I am convinced that the majority of the rank and file of the labour movement in this country are still satisfied it is in their best interests to support the anti-inflation program on the basis that run-away inflation has never been helpful to the rank and file in this country.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that approximately 175,000 federal public servants are affiliated with the CLC can the minister advise whether these public servants are prepared to support a general strike and if so what steps the government is prepared to take to prevent an illegal walkout or to prosecute those who take part in an illegal walkout?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I believe a significant element in the labour leadership in this country believe in obeying the law and I trust they will keep to that position.

**SUGGESTED ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEE TO MEET
LABOUR OFFICIALS TO TRY TO PREVENT GENERAL STRIKE**

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the primary concern of both labour and all members of parliament ought to be the public interest, would the minister support the establishment of an all party committee of members of parliament to meet with officials of the CLC in order to try to avoid the threatened general strike and to negotiate a basis for labour's return to the Canada Labour Relations Council and the Economic Council of Canada?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, any technique would be helpful, but I wonder whether escalating the matter at this stage is a good thing in view of the fact that Mr. McDermott himself said it would be a rash action at this time.

[Mr. Fraser.]

**GOVERNMENT ACTION TO HAVE LABOUR REPRESENTATIVES
RETURN TO ECONOMIC AND LABOUR RELATIONS COUNCILS**

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that it is important something be done in respect of bringing back the tripartite agency, would the minister indicate what he is doing to clarify this or is he just sitting there in the hope that there will be a pleasant outcome?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I think labour was fully aware there were significant gains to be made under the tripartite relationship, and if at the present time they do not wish to participate in this way, the opportunity is there for them to participate with management to carry on some of the programs and I believe that aspect is being explored.

**HALL REPORT—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON REACTION OF
PARTIES**

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, in respect of the Hall report, which is in keeping with the questions we are asking, the minister on Wednesday, April 7, 1976 in response to a question put by the hon. member for Vancouver South indicated that he would be able to comment with more exactitude tomorrow on the length of time it would take to determine whether the conclusions of Mr. Justice E. Hall were acceptable. Now that the union committees have met has the minister received any indications from either side concerning the decision either side will take with regard to the report?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say that both sides are examining it very closely. There has been no rejection of this as yet. I might add that I asked Mr. Justice Hall, which is within my power under the code, to clarify one or two aspects which could lend themselves to an ambiguous interpretation. He is doing this now and I will be able to respond more specifically to the hon. member in a couple of days after I receive that clarification.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, apparently Mr. Justice Hall indicated that the unions had agreed to live within the spirit of the anti-inflation guidelines. Is this one of the matters of confusion which has been placed before Mr. Justice Hall, because apparently the union in question does not go along with that conclusion? Did the minister bring this to the attention of Mr. Justice Hall?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): No, Mr. Speaker, that is not one of the areas within the specific interpretation of some of the recommendations. If Mr. Justice Hall says that, my inclination would be to accept it because as we all know he has a high degree of credibility and accuracy in dealing with these matters.