

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, July 13, 1973

The House met at 11 a.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

HEALTH AND WELFARE

SUGGESTED JUDICIAL INQUIRY INTO RENTAL OF OFFICE SPACE—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION

Mr. Speaker: Order. Yesterday the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo (Mr. Beatty) proposed a motion under the terms of Standing Order 43. The Chair had some reservations about the terms of the motion. I felt that perhaps there was a suggestion that the motion, as drafted, implied a charge by innuendo. My main reservation in connection with Standing Order 43 is the one which I have brought to the attention of the House before, that really the use of the Standing Order ought to be considered very gingerly by hon. members because there is no opportunity for the government to reply to charges, statements and declarations made under Standing Order 43 since we have immediately to ask unanimous consent of the House. This is why I thought we should not embark on a situation where we enlarge in any way the use of Standing Order 43. I have always felt that, to some extent at least, there is an over use of the Standing Order, and with this in mind I thought I should have a look at the hon. member's proposed motion. But the matter having been aired to some extent later on by the hon. member in the question he asked, there may be no harm if at this point I simply ask if there is unanimous consent.

[Translation]

I was referring to the motion moved by the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo yesterday and I ask the House if there is unanimous consent.

[English]

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimity, so I cannot put the hon. member's motion to the House.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

LABOUR RELATIONS

DISPUTE WITH NON-OPERATING RAILWAY EMPLOYEES—REQUEST FOR INTERVENTION OF MINISTER—POSSIBLE RECALL OF PARLIAMENT—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. In his absence I will direct it to the Acting Prime Minister, but if I may say so, Mr. Speaker, we have a right to expect the Minister of Labour to be here and to be accountable during this developing labour situation. May I ask the Acting Prime Minister if, in the light of the failure of the conciliation board to find common ground with the railways and the non-operating unions, the government has reached any decision on what action will be taken to avert a strike?

• (1110)

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker, no definite decision has yet been taken. We are still hopeful that the normal procedure will bring about a settlement.

Mr. McGrath: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the Acting Prime Minister if the absence of the Minister of Labour this morning means that at last the Minister of Labour is prepared to personally intervene to help settle this dispute?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. gentleman for recognizing that there are occasions when ministers must be absent from the House on public business. I am not quite certain whether the Minister of Labour is engaged in this activity, but at any rate he is making every effort possible to bring about a solution.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary. May I ask the government House leader if it is the intention to recall Parliament in the event of a strike, which now seems very likely?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the hon. member would appreciate that a question asked in those terms is hypothetical. I appreciate the importance of the matter, of course.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, since I just spoke the Minister of Labour has come into the House. Perhaps, with the indulgence of the House, the minister might take the House into his confidence and tell us what his position is with regard to the failure of the conciliation board to find common ground in the dispute between the railways and the non-operating union and state whether he is now prepared to intervene personally?