

Oral Questions

Mr. Alexander: I just want to tell the hon. member that, as I stated yesterday, the mediator was meeting with the parties involved in a private way. I have received confirmation, contrary to press reports, that there have been—I say this without any equivocation—private meetings with certain parties and discussions have been held.

I would think that the hon. member would know the way that mediation works and that this is the procedure that is brought about when there is an ability to know that an all-encompassing meeting around the table is counterproductive. The mediator intends to follow this course of action in order to bring about a solution to this very worrisome matter, and we hope now that the parties will get together in order to bring about the necessary solution.

Mr. Rodriguez: In view of the fact that I have in my hand a telegram from the trade unions representing the workers, in which they indicate clearly that no discussions are taking place and none are planned, can the minister inform the House who these persons are who are having these private discussions to resolve the matter? Stop bamboozling us; come clean!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexander: There is another word which I think the hon. member cannot use effectively. I wish the hon. member would acquire his own vocabulary.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alexander: The parties with whom the mediator is meeting are, of course, the parties to the dispute and I do not accept the hon. member's premise, arrived at by way of some telegram, that there are no meetings being held and no meetings planned. Certainly meetings are being planned. The mediator knows his job and he has been meeting with the parties in the dispute and has been having discussions with them.

It does not serve any good purpose for the hon. member to aggravate what is a very delicate situation. It seems to me that he does not want the strike settled, but I want it settled and the only way we can settle it is to use common sense—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[*Translation*]

MINISTER'S INVOLVEMENT IN NEGOTIATIONS TO SETTLE STRIKE

Mr. Jacques Olivier (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Labour.

He has just indicated that meetings are now in progress. I think he has been misinformed: no meeting is being held at the present time. I should also like to ask the Minister of Labour whether he will decide to intervene personally to solve the problem, and when he will accept the recommendations made

[*Mr. Alexander.*]

by the Prime Minister to the effect that he should ask to be involved in this case and to solve the problem. When will he decide that the country is not made up of two parts and that it is normal that the problem should be solved in Montreal and in Vancouver?

[*English*]

Hon. Lincoln M. Alexander (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the hon. member is screaming about.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexander: Let me tell him that, in terms of personal involvement, I have had more involvement with this particular work stoppage than any other.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexander: He does not know, or he conveniently forgets, that I have met with CNTU who have indicated to me that the only way this matter can be resolved is by way of a settlement, and I told them to go back and settle the dispute.

In terms of what the Prime Minister had indicated about personal involvement, we did appoint a mediator who has been on top of the situation. If the hon. member wants the strike settled, he should be more constructive in his questions, he should understand that delicate negotiations are going on and that any flimflamery or bamboozling we have heard from the hon. member and the hon. member for Nickel Belt will not solve the situation in a very meaningful way.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

INQUIRY WHY THRONE SPEECH OMITTED ANY REFERENCE TO AGRICULTURE

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address my question to the Minister of Agriculture, I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his new responsibilities and to assure him of our co-operation while wishing him good luck in the almost impossible task of replacing the hon. member who preceded him.

An hon. Member: How true!

Mr. Lessard: However, Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the minister if the way to face the challenge is really that which the Speech from the Throne suggests: nowhere is mention made of the agriculture department, except for a reference to grains, which are the responsibility of the Minister of Transport.

I wish to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he really intends to participate actively in promoting his department