

in the House. I want to tell him that, if he would be prepared to call those amendments, I am advised by the hon. member for Elgin (Mr. Wise), our critic for agriculture, that they could proceed through all stages and we could complete them. I gather there is some anxiety about this because of the necessity for funding the corporation. We regard this as a very important statute.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, it is not quite clear from the remarks of the hon. opposition House leader whether the agreement was that the bill proceed through all stages without debate. If that is the agreement of the House, that the Farm Credit Act amending Bill be called right now and that it proceed through all stages without debate, I think it could be called now.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, if I did not make myself clear, I apologize. That was the purpose of my intervention.

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I take it that is agreed with the other parties also?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the disposition of the House to proceed through all stages of the Farm Credit Act amendments without debate? If so, is there a disposition and agreement to call that legislation now? Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FARM CREDIT ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture) moved that Bill C-29, to amend the Farm Credit Act, as reported (with amendment) from the Standing Committee on Agriculture, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Whelan moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.

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POSTAL SERVICE OPERATIONS ACT, 1978

MEASURE TO ENSURE CONTINUATION OF REGULAR POSTAL OPERATIONS

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour) moved that Bill C-45, to provide for the continuation of regular postal service

Postal Service

operations, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a few brief remarks with respect to this particular bill. As hon. members may have noted, the bill is of a single page so it will not require much analysis other than to indicate that it is to provide for the continuation of regular postal service operations during the period of a dissolution of parliament.

By way of background, may I briefly outline to the House the history of the current round of collective bargaining between the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Treasury Board, as employer.

The collective agreement expired June 30, 1977. Direct negotiations did not lead to agreement, and on November 30, 1977, the employer requested the Public Service Staff Relations Board to appoint a conciliation board, in accordance with the provisions of the Public Service Staff Relations Act.

The chairman of the conciliation board, Mr. Louis Courtemanche, was appointed on February 3, 1978, to complete the three-man board which includes Mr. Irving Gaul and Mr. Roy Heenan as members. The chairman of the Public Service Staff Relations Board set out terms of reference for the conciliation board on March 29, 1978, and the board commenced its hearings yesterday, on April 10, 1978.

By introducing this bill I am not attempting in any way to interfere in the process of negotiations by officers of the Post Office and the bargaining committee of the trade unions in the Post Office. Nor do I anticipate that the amendment proposed by the bill would interfere with that orderly process in the future—with the single exception of a breakdown in negotiations that could occur during a federal election.

I would like to assure hon. members that the government continues to rely on the voluntary determination of any new collective agreement by the parties. The officers of the Post Office and the bargaining committee of the post office unions can, and may, reach a collective agreement by their own devices. When the conciliation process is invoked, the parties can, and should, be able to settle any dispute either before or after the chairman of the board of conciliation has delivered the report.

However, there is always the possibility that no settlement will be reached and a strike could occur during an election campaign. I would be among the first to recognize that public employees have normally used their democratic rights as trade unionists wisely and responsibly. Public service unions in Canada have not been strike-happy in the past, and I do not believe they are quick to call a strike at this time. However, during a period in which parliament has been dissolved, a strike in the postal service would put the public at a severe disadvantage. I am also advised, as far as the possibility of an election is concerned that should a strike occur during an election campaign it would be most disruptive and costly as far as the election process is concerned.

It is fair to say also that this could well put postal workers at great disadvantage. The point is that the country's preoccupa-