

Oral Questions

settlement in sight and the shutdown is now three weeks old, will the government now introduce legislation to restore the postal service to Canadians which will provide a further period for resumption of negotiations?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Not now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Clarke: On Tuesday the Prime Minister said:

At some time the right of free collective bargaining has to give way to intervention by parliament when we judge that the public disservice caused by a strike outweighs the freedom of the right to strike itself.

How long will the country have to wait before the Prime Minister and the government decides that the public disservice outweighs the freedom of the right to strike?

Mr. Trudeau: That is a matter of judgment.

STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—REASON FOR PAYMENT OF EMPLOYEES ON STRIKE

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the right hon. Prime Minister. Can the Prime Minister advise the House why, after threatening the union and the country with a long strike, the government has arranged to have workers paid for work they did not do, and will this practice continue?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will have to look into the question put by the hon. member.

STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON BACK TO WORK LEGISLATION IN VIEW OF FAILURE OF UNION TO CONSULT MEMBERS ON SETTLEMENT OFFER

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): I did address that question to the right hon. Prime Minister, and now I will address another question to him. Last night the union's executive decided against putting the government offer to the membership, thus effectively precluding any way of accurately knowing whether the membership wants the strike to continue. Under such circumstances, is it still government policy to let the strike continue indefinitely?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): If the word "indefinitely" was used by the hon. member as it was used by his colleague a moment ago, I told the House it would be a matter of judgment when parliament will be asked to bring in legislation to have the postmen return to work.

Mr. Fraser: Is the right hon. Prime Minister advising the House that the government has not precluded from its options the possibility of back to work legislation?

Mr. Trudeau: That is obvious from what I said a few days ago.

[Mr. Clarke (Vancouver Quadra).]

FINANCE

POSSIBILITY OF MEASURES TO STIMULATE HOUSING STARTS AND LOWER PRICES

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. In view of the fact that 60 per cent of the increase in the consumer price index for October was attributable to housing, and in view of the fact that Mr. John Boyd, the president of the Canadian Real Estate Association, stated yesterday that the government's new anti-inflation program will sharply reduce sales activity in the housing industry and that the present give-away program under the guise of stimulating housing demands is totally impracticable, and if you want people to buy a house, lower the price, what steps will the Minister of Finance take to meet these two important problems of increasing the housing starts and lowering the price of homes?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Actually, Mr. Speaker, I notice in the CPI statistics that the higher home ownership charges are largely attributable to an average rise of over 13 per cent in residential property taxes, one of the prime contributors to the increase in all items of CPI. I would remark to the hon. gentleman that these are some of the consequences of the very high settlements in the public sector which are coming home to roost with us in the higher taxes that the whole community has to pay. It really was for the purpose of restraining those kinds of settlements in the public sector, as well as others in the private sector, and increases in rents, prices and profits that we brought in the over-all control program.

POSSIBILITY OF MEASURES TO COMPEL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO DIRECT FUNDS INTO MORTGAGES

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): The Minister of State for Urban Affairs has said that he expects the financial institutions to co-operate with the government and to allocate an additional \$750 million into the mortgage market in 1976. In view of the fact that this spring the same minister in committee gave assurances that he had persuaded the financial institutions to put an additional \$1 billion into the mortgage market this year, and in view of the fact that according to the minister's officials only \$300 million of this amount was achieved, does the Minister of Finance intend to introduce measures to compel the financial institutions to direct more funds into mortgages, or does the minister share the naive hopes of his colleague?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we think that effective persuasion can be brought to bear on the lending institutions, bearing in mind of course that we also seek from the same institutions support for provincial and municipal financing as well, and there has to be a balancing of financing activities in Canada.