

Government Orders

To answer the question of the hon. member for Kenora—Rainy River, the board will determine the time limit that it deems appropriate after hearing the arguments of both sides. Employers who do not agree among themselves, have the right to make representations to the board. Based on those representations, the board will rule on the appointment and the time limit. I believe that the board has an in-depth knowledge of the matter, since it has followed the process on the employees' side, as well as among the different employers that have gone to the board several times already.

So I do not foresee any problem on that issue. The decision is still up to the board, once it has heard the parties involved.

[English]

Mr. Murphy: Madam Chairman, my question relates to the same issue of timing. I would like to use this opportunity especially since the officials are here to say that I am also concerned that there would be a situation where the board would take a long time to act and that could provoke a strike or a lockout or a refusal to negotiate. I know that this House acted quickly about a month ago to pass legislation calling upon the Minister of Labour to appoint arbitrators in the case of those postal employees who were fired or disciplined during that disturbance. It relates to the time at which the Canada Labour Relations Board acted.

I wonder if the member could tell us through the advice he might get from his officials if an arbitrator or arbitrators have been appointed to deal with those people. Some of them have lost their jobs and are obviously unemployed at this time.

[Translation]

Mr. Vincent: Madam Speaker, you will understand my interest in the Department of Finance, but I am not as knowledgeable about the Department of Labour. I am very pleased to be involved in this issue, but unfortunately, I do not have the competence to answer my hon. colleague.

However, I am taking note of his question and will transmit it to the minister responsible who I am sure will answer him at the earliest opportunity.

[English]

The Chairman: I think the hon. member for Churchill would understand that as chairperson for this committee I was in a bit of a quandary as to the relevancy of his question. I allowed the hon. member to answer. I think you will be happy to know that the question has been taken as notice and an answer will come to him.

• (1040)

Mr. Murphy: Madam Chair, I recognize that the member who is answering for the government is the parliamentary secretary of finance. Usually when we have legislation of this nature which we deal with in the Committee of the Whole we actually do have the responsible minister available.

We agreed to proceed with this legislation knowing the minister would not be here. After we have rushed through legislation—and in both cases it is legislation under the auspices of the Minister of Labour—we are being asked to pass this legislation quickly. We were asked to pass the back-to-work legislation for the postal workers quickly. We are therefore quite curious to see how long it takes government and government bodies to act afterward.

[Translation]

Mr. Vincent: Madam Speaker, with respect to this legislation, I can assure my colleague that if the government does not act as swiftly as I think it should, I will be very pleased to inform the hon. member accordingly and to ask for his help again in order to make the government move quickly.

[English]

Mr. Nault: Madam Chairman, I would like to ask the officials specifically if they could give us this kind of information. Was this situation in another particular sector of labour management relations ever used in order to get the particular group of employers or employees for that matter to the bargaining table? Or is this the first situation on record?

I would like to clarify where I am coming from. Would it not be more appropriate for speed purposes in order to get a situation like this rectified to give the Minister of Labour the particular powers necessary to appoint on behalf of the employers either a representative to deal with the employees or to appoint an arbitrator from the outset when the employers are in a situation where there is no agreement?