

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

LABOUR RELATIONS

DISPUTE WITH NON-OPERATING RAILWAY EMPLOYEES—
CONTINGENCY PLANS TO MOVE GRAIN AND FOOD IN
EVENT OF STRIKE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I intended to direct my question to the Minister of Labour. Perhaps he will be back in a few moments. In the meantime, I will direct it to the Prime Minister. It is in connection with the railway dispute. Has the government prepared any contingency plans to ensure there will be no disruption of the movement of essential foodstuffs as a result of this dispute? I ask this in view of the rising cost of food and the shortage of certain types of foodstuffs.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the position of the government is that we very much hope a strike will be averted. We have confidence in the goodwill of the parties negotiating in this dispute. However, if contingency action is needed, the government will of course be prepared to take it.

Mr. Stanfield: Am I to assume the Prime Minister's answer would be the same with regard to contingency plans for the movement of western grain to world markets in the event of disruption?

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

DISPUTE WITH NON-OPERATING RAILWAY EMPLOYEES—
POSSIBLE NEW PROPOSALS—DATE OF RESUMPTION OF
NEGOTIATIONS

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Labour with regard to the dispute between the railways and the non-operating unions. Are the services of the experienced departmental mediators to which the minister referred now being used? Are new talks underway between the railways and the unions concerned? Have any new proposals been prepared and are they being discussed at this time?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the Leader of the Opposition, I do not think any new proposals are being discussed at this moment because the parties are now studying the conciliation board report. As the Leader of the Opposition may know, we officially received it late Friday afternoon. Both sides are formulating their views with respect to the report right now. This process will take, perhaps, today and tomorrow. But they are aware, unofficially certainly, that the mediation services of our department are available, and we are standing by. As soon as they have had an opportunity to formulate a reaction to the report I hope they will accept intervention by our mediator in an effort to resolve the dispute.

[Mr. Knight.]

● (1420)

Mr. Stanfield: Am I correct in assuming from what the minister has said that no date has been fixed for any renewal of meetings between the parties concerned?

Mr. Munro: No, Mr. Speaker. That is correct. There is no point in setting a date until the parties have formulated their reaction to the report. As soon as they do so, we can endeavour to set a date—immediately afterwards, I would hope, or within a day or so.

DISPUTE WITH NON-OPERATING RAILWAY EMPLOYEES—
POSSIBILITY OF RECESS OF PARLIAMENT BEFORE
SETTLEMENT

Mr. Duncan M. Beattie (Hamilton Mountain): A question for the Prime Minister. Is the government prepared to recess the House before there is a settlement of the railway dispute or any assurance that there will not be a rail strike later this summer?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I think the government and the opposition parties will have a chance to express their views on these various subjects if and when an adjournment motion is put before the House.

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TRANSPORT

SUGGESTION TO PUT CANADIAN PACIFIC INTO
TRUSTEESHIP AS BASIS FOR DISCUSSION OF NATIONAL
TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Mr. Bill Knight (Assiniboia): A further question to the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that on a number of occasions parliament has been called upon to bring an end to rail strikes and, in effect, to bring an end to collective bargaining within the railway system, can the right hon. gentleman tell the House whether the government is giving consideration to putting the estates and operation of the CPR into trusteeship and examining on that basis the entire question of national railway transportation policy in Canada?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The question of the national aspects of transportation problems is one to which the minister has been giving considerable attention. Some discussion of it will take place at the Western Economic Opportunities Conference. As to the other part of the question, the answer is no.

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LABOUR RELATIONS

DISPUTE WITH NON-OPERATING RAILWAY EMPLOYEES—
SUGGESTED INTERVENTION BY MINISTER

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): A supplementary to the Minister of Labour. In view of the fact that the conciliators failed to reach common ground, and since a strike can now legally take place at about the time parliament is scheduled to adjourn for the summer recess, may I