

conducting its negotiations as a crown corporation should, independently of the government; but we have had a successive series of reports from Air Canada.

Our view is that the company has made a very generous offer—an extremely generous one—of settlement, but that the unions are demanding wage increases which are completely beyond the capacity of the company to pay. Since there does not seem to be an imminent chance of a meeting of the two sides on this, it is possible that there will be a strike. However, the Department of Labour is of course, very actively following the matter, and if there is anything that the government can do short of promising any additional money, the government will do it.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the last offer made by Air Canada will still leave the employees of Air Canada below the parity figure, which seems to be the basis that has been established by the President of the Treasury Board, is the government prepared to reconsider its offer in light of the principle laid down by the government itself?

May I also ask the Prime Minister whether representatives of Air Canada have been instructed, as some of them claim, to adhere to an economical wage guideline set down by the government?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, on the latter point, they have not been so instructed. If they had, I doubt whether their offer would be as generous as it is, in fact. On the first point, it has never been and it is not the policy of this government to accept the principle of parity between wages in Canada and wages in the United States. If it were otherwise, it is obvious that one part of the population and one part of the workers would have to pay for the increases paid to others. It is obvious that the standard of living and the productivity of this country is lower than that of the United States; therefore it is impossible for all workers to be placed in a parity position with workers in the United States. Neither do we think it a good principle to let some workers who are in a stronger bargaining position transfer wealth from the poorer workers to the richer workers.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, in view of the inconvenience that may be caused to a great many people in Canada, may I ask the Prime Minister whether any arrangements are being

### *Inquiries of the Ministry*

made to have the Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National Railways handle perishable commodities in the event that this strike does take place?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, we are not taking the position yet that the strike is inevitable. I can tell the house, however, that a committee of cabinet is embarked on contingency planning of all kinds to make sure that there is the smallest possible disruption of the economy and service to the public, should the strike take place.

**Mr. Bell:** Where the hell is the Minister of Labour?

### SUGGESTED COMMON NEGOTIATING DATE WITH UNIONS

**Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour, in view of the absence of the minister? Has the Department of Labour discussed with Air Canada the possibility of arranging one date for having contract negotiations with unions involved, so that those negotiations may take place at one time and thus avert these perpetual strike threats every few months?

**Mr. Jim McNulty (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the situation but I will certainly take it into consideration. The Minister of Labour, I believe, will be back shortly.

[*Translation*]

### CANADIAN ECONOMY

#### REMEDIAL MEASURES CONTEMPLATED BY GOVERNMENT

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a question to the Prime Minister.

In view of the fact that the unemployment rate amounts to 8.4 per cent of the total labor force in Quebec, could the Prime Minister tell the house whether or not his government has any intention of resorting in the near future to a specific means of settling this problem prevailing particularly in the province of Quebec?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, without acknowledging that the statistical data quoted by the hon. member are accurate and without necessarily saying that the only way out would be a change in government in Quebec, I must say that