

the four Atlantic provinces and a meeting which was scheduled with the Prairie provinces on transportation for June 7 has now been postponed at the request, I believe, of the province of Alberta.

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[Translation]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

DATE OF PRESENTATION OF BILL RESPECTING ELECTION EXPENSES—REPRESENTATIONS TO GOVERNMENT

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Prime Minister.

Could he tell us what stage the proceedings have reached concerning an electoral reform; is the government still considering the possibility of preparing a bill before the summer adjournment?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we still intend to carry on.

Mr. Latulippe: Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a supplementary question.

Does the Prime Minister find that the matter has some importance and could he tell us whether he has received representations from the other parties or other Canadian taxpayers asking for reforms, especially as regards the financing of candidates at election time?

Mr. Trudeau: It is possible, Mr. Speaker, but I do not remember any specific representation. It is possible that someone wrote me in that connection, but I do not recall any special communication. We have tried to answer all legitimate requests.

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[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ALLEGED LOW POSITION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ON GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITY LIST

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. Can he explain to the House why it is that the government has relegated to the very bottom of the list of priorities the subject of environmental protection, as reported in the leaked cabinet document, when so recently it was such a high priority matter on the government's list?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The government has not done that, Mr. Speaker.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

INQUIRY AS TO SETTING OF PRIORITY ON NATIONAL ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. On or before May 17, did the cabinet set a priority

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on the subject entitled "Secure Our National Economic Independence" and, if so, where did the subject rank on the list of priorities?

● (1510)

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister and my colleague have already indicated, I do not intend to comment on alleged cabinet leaks.

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that I did not refer to any paper but simply asked whether on May 17 such a priority was set and, if so, what was the numerical priority?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.

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AIR CANADA

POSSIBLE STRIKE OF MACHINISTS—REQUEST FOR PERSONAL INTERVENTION OF MINISTER TO AVERT

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, on another matter of priority I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Labour. In view of the fact the machinists union has voted overwhelmingly for strike action, is it the intention of the minister to follow the excellent example of his predecessor, the hon. member for Verdun, and personally intervene in this dispute with a view of trying to avert a strike which would result in the tying up of air travel in Canada?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the hon. member in terms of the excellent job the hon. member for Verdun did as Minister of Labour.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): I would advise the hon. member that Mr. Gallagher, the conciliation commissioner who came down with a report which has not been accepted, has re-entered the picture. I have appointed him, with the consent of both sides, and he is attempting to mediate the dispute. It is my hope that he will be successful.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the union can legally strike at any time beginning tomorrow and that we could have a series of rotating strikes beginning tomorrow, does the minister personally intend to intervene in this matter and does the government have a contingency plan to meet the situation in the event of a strike?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member should be aware it is natural that the government is concerned—I am sure the opposition shares this concern—that there not be a strike in this country. We also adhere to the principle of free collective bargaining. The fact remains that if you adhere to that principle the strike weapon remains in the hands of the union members of this particular company. Having said that—and we of this party adhere to that principle and I believe the mem-