

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Clark: And my question to the Minister of Communications concerns—

An hon. Member: The strike.

Mr. Clark: The strike, yes, but—

[English]

My question to the minister has to do with how long the government expects this strike to continue, and particularly, since there are rumours of an imminent provincial election in Quebec, whether it is in the plans of the government to take action to ensure that there will be coverage in the province of Quebec of all sides in an election campaign, or will it consign the people of Quebec to the same news blackout during an election campaign to which its actions consigned the people of Quebec during the constitutional debate?

[Translation]

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, as I said last week in reply to a question from another member from Calgary on cablevision coverage, I think it is this side of the House which suffers from lack of coverage because if the Canadian people, especially francophones in Quebec, could actually see how weak the arguments but forward by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition and his party are, it would be much to our advantage, and in that sense we are most anxious to see the strike come to an end.

QUEBECERS' RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): I have a supplementary, Madam Speaker. For the sake of national unity I will point out to the minister the distinction between Calgary and Edmonton; there is a slight difference. I think that the basic question here is whether the people of Quebec will be able to benefit from the services of the CBC French network during such crucial time as a provincial election. We had a situation where the residents of the province of Quebec were denied the right to watch on television the debates of the constitutional committee as well as events with great significance for their future. So the question now is whether the federal government which is responsible for the CBC French network is prepared to go along with another delay which could deny Quebecers the right to watch the provincial election debates on the CBC French network.

Hon. Francis Fox (Secretary of State and Minister of Communications): Madam Speaker, as I said earlier in answer to the Leader of the Opposition, we are continuing negotiations with the union to which the CBC French network is not party. The Minister of Labour has appointed a mediator whom the Leader of the Opposition knows very well. We have been trying for a long time to settle that strike. The latest salary

offer from the CBC even included a lump-sum payment of \$2,300.

I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that his remark about the difference between Calgary and Edmonton could be checked with the hon. member who put the question to me last week, and I would tell him that that member does indeed represent a Calgary and not an Edmonton riding.

[English]

INQUIRY RESPECTING SETTLEMENT DEADLINE

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Labour. I would like to ask whether the Government of Canada has a deadline for the settlement of this strike and, if so, what is that deadline?

● (1440)

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, the right hon. gentleman is fully aware that under the powers of the Department of Labour it is not possible to have a deadline, that the role of the department is to provide expert mediation services to the parties to help bring about an agreement, and therefore if he is asking whether we are considering legislating an end to the strike and removing the right of collective bargaining, we are not considering that. I can assure him of that.

However, I do assure him through you, Madam Speaker, that the negotiations are continuing, that our mediator is very much involved, and it is true that the union membership turned down an offer by the CBC last Friday. I believe it will be necessary for both parties to move further than they have for an agreement to be achieved. I think it is appropriate in particular for the CBC to improve its wage offer, but there also may be some further movement required on the part of the union. I believe that with some give and take an agreement is possible, and I hope that it can come very soon.

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EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION

CONTRACTS SIGNED BY DOMESTICS PRIOR TO IMMIGRATING

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The minister, I am sure, has received representations from groups acting on behalf of women who come to work in Canada as domestics in which it is made clear that many of them are not paid the wages or benefits which they were promised before they arrived.

Is the minister or his department giving consideration to including in the contract which is signed a provision which would permit domestics to claim from their employers the wages and benefits the employer agrees to before the domestics arrive?