

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I think technically and legally this situation is considered a strike. I do not think it would be beneficial at this stage to start talking about further legislation to end the strike, or a lockout if that is how the hon. member personally may wish to interpret it. The fact of the matter is that I am hopeful we can still find a means of settling this dispute without provoking a situation where we agree we have to start talking about legislation. Mr. Collins is there. He was appointed yesterday, as the hon. member knows, and I think we should give him a chance to see what he can do over the course of the next few days.

Mr. Leggatt: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the minister we should give Mr. Collins perhaps a couple of days, but this is a strike which is becoming increasingly bitter and it is over just one clause in a previous union contract, namely the question of job security. The report called simply for an 18-month study of that particular clause. In view of the fact that seven times since 1972 we have forced workers back to work, is it not time that for once in this House we asked a company to accept a reasonable proposal and put the dispute back where it belongs?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member has a rather short memory. The last time I came in with legislation in this House affecting my own department was to end a lockout in the port of Halifax.

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URBAN AFFAIRS

ALLEGED LACK OF CONSULTATION WITH PROVINCES— GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Dean Whiteway (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of State for Urban Affairs may I direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. It has to do with the report of the western premiers' task force on constitutional trends. Page 31 of the report talks about consultation with the provinces being non-existent. Can the Deputy Prime Minister tell us specifically what the government has in mind that it is going to do to correct the situation which is spoken about in this report, namely that consultation with the provinces in the area of housing and urban affairs is non-existent?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have not studied the report referred to by the hon. member, but he will realize that the Prime Minister is currently holding a series of consultations with the provincial premiers, and I am sure that housing is one of the subjects which will be brought forward. In any event, I think I am fairly well founded in my statement that housing is one of the elements which will be in the minds of the Prime Minister and the premiers when they meet in the new year, as has been suggested. So I believe the hon. member need not be concerned that housing is being neglected in federal-provincial consultations.

Oral Questions

AGRICULTURE

PROTECTION OF PRODUCER INTERESTS DURING GATT NEGOTIATIONS—GOVERNMENT ACTION—REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE OF TARIFF BOARD REPORTS

Mr. John Wise (Elgin): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. Up to now, at least, the minister has refused to give any commitment or guarantee that Canadian agricultural interests would not be traded off at the present GATT talks. Is the minister prepared today to give any guarantee or commitment?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I wish any member of the government could give a full commitment or guarantee regarding his desires for agriculture or for whatever department he is responsible. These negotiations are held at a very confidential level. We have made submissions. I am sure the hon. member knows fully my views on what I think should be done to protect agriculture, and I have not changed those views.

Mr. Wise: Mr. Speaker, I think it is obvious that the minister is not prepared to give a guarantee, but would he be receptive to the suggestion that the two tariff board reports be referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture so that the industry would have a further opportunity for input?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I think I intimated the other day that I had no objection to this. I have had discussions with the House leader and I will be discussing this further with him tomorrow.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON UNIVERSALITY OF OLD AGE PENSIONS AND FAMILY ALLOWANCES

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. On November 23 when I asked her whether she was planning to rearrange family allowances and the old age pension in order to get funds to pay for her proposed guaranteed annual income, as reported at page 1164 of *Hansard* she said she was studying rearrangements which would "take away from those who do not need universal programs." I asked her the same question on December 1, namely, whether she would take away from those who did not need the universal programs, family allowances and old age pensions, and she responded by saying there is no way that these programs will be modified. Her answer on December 1 directly opposes her answer of November 23. I should like to ask her now whether she is taking the position that she can have it both ways; that she can have these two programs simultaneously universal and selective?