

the Department of Environment and in this case that department had no major objection to the work under progress.

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[English]

LABOUR RELATIONS

SETTLEMENT OF STRIKE BY SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL UNION

Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, in view of today's reports that technical interpretation was stalling settlement of the SIU strike, is the Minister of Labour continuing his efforts to settle the dispute?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Shame!

An hon. Member: Give him a promotion.

Mr. Alexander: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Hamilton West rises on a point of order.

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance indicates that this is sour grapes. It is certainly not sour grapes. It is just a matter of seeing that parliament works as it should work. Rather than answer a planted question, the minister should have stood up and indicated that he wished to make a statement. He has the chance now to revert to motions and tell us what has happened.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Vaudreuil on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Herbert: Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons we ask questions in the House. One is for the purpose of receiving information. This question is asked for the purpose of receiving information. I therefore suggest I am perfectly within my rights in asking the question, and I request that the minister answer.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has asked a question. He was recognized for that purpose, and certainly the minister has a right to reply to the question.

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, if I interpret the point of the hon. member for Hamilton West correctly, I am more than happy to ask for the permission of the House to revert to motions. It will be a very short statement indeed, if I have that permission.

Mr. Speaker: Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

SIU Strike Settlement

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

LABOUR RELATIONS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SETTLEMENT OF STRIKE BY SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL UNION

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, the parties met in intensive sessions since last Thursday night until this morning about ten o'clock almost non-stop. If I may report to the House, Mr. Speaker, I think there were intensive efforts by both parties. Mr. Roman Gralewicz of the SIU excelled himself, I believe, as leader of the union in the negotiations, and management did also. They certainly convinced each other, convinced me and I believe convinced the people of Canada of their desire for settlement and indeed they achieved one. To the degree that either myself or my officials were helpful in promoting this settlement, that is to be expected. I think the settlement was a good one for all concerned. It was 10 per cent in the first year of a two-year agreement and 12 per cent in the second year.

Before some hon. members start raising what may be an apparent argument to them, that this settlement is inflationary, I would point out that they should take into consideration that it is built on a conversion formula and built into a 40-hour week. I think everyone will agree that the hours of overtime were excessive. Also, the past agreement which expired on December 31, 1972 was a three-year agreement. There was a lot of catching up to be done. When one looks at the rates one will agree that these employees were certainly paid at a very low rate. That being the case, on a comparative basis I do not think the settlement can be regarded as an excessive one. Certainly I believe it was fair and equitable in every way.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House thank the minister for his statement which he was forced to make. We welcome the statement because a prolonged strike unquestionably would have been detrimental to the public interest, the interest that we as parliamentarians I think should have uppermost in our minds.

The whole question of the collective bargaining process certainly has been brought into question, and I think rightly so. It appears to me that the third party so vitally concerned about what happens in the collective bargaining process is not represented at the bargaining table. This is the reason we must be concerned about arriving at a happy balance between protection of the collective bargaining system, with the time-honoured right to strike and to lock out, and the public interest. There is a need to see that services are provided and goods are moved.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, speaking personally and on behalf of my party may I say that we place a great deal of emphasis on and have an interest in and sympathy for the public interest and the need to have goods moved and services provided without interruption. This is why we believe we should continually be thinking about new methods whereby the collective bargaining process can work—