

by asking the question in a different form. The hon. member is asking why there was a delay. I wonder whether that is a point of debate. I would hope the hon. member could ask a supplementary question which might be more immediate than debating what has happened over the last four months.

Mr. Skoberg: I will reword my question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the four-month delay in setting up and constituting the conciliation board, can the minister now say whether any progress has been made in the negotiations?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the negotiating teams are meeting today and will be meeting directly with both the CNR and CPR tomorrow in order to expedite a settlement. The hon. member is quite correct in saying that there has been undue delay. One reason has been the untimely death of the chief negotiator for the unions. Whatever influence the hon. member may have with the unions, it would be appreciated if he would suggest to them that they go back to work and let the negotiating teams in Montreal do the negotiating.

Mr. Skoberg: In view of the fact that there appears to have been a six-month lag between the time the conciliation board was constituted and when it handed down its report, can the minister indicate to the House whether or not any extension of time was granted to the conciliation board for making its report?

Mr. Mackasey: It is traditional and normal to extend the mandate of the conciliation board beyond the normal period if the chairman so requests, particularly when the chairman of the board is a man of such integrity as Mr. Gallagher.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Did the minister imply that the chairman requested the extension of time?

Mr. Mackasey: I implied nothing beyond simply saying that the conciliation board tried to complete its report as soon as possible.

Mr. Rose: Was there such a request for an extension of time before handing down the report and, if so, by whom was such extension requested?

Mr. Mackasey: Any request would be legitimate, and I would have to verify to see whether the extension of time was simply the request of the chairman, which I think is in order, or whether it was a joint request of all the parties involved in the dispute.

Mr. Rose: May I ask the minister why there were no continuous negotiations over the past weekend? As the minister is well aware, there have been tie-ups on both the CN and CP in the west.

Mr. Mackasey: I am aware of the fact that there were not continuous negotiations over the weekend, but I know the hon. gentleman is sincere in his desire to see an end to this dispute, and I do not think it would help in any way if I were to single out one party or the other for their negligence in this regard.

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Inquiries of the Ministry

EFFECT OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH OTHER RAILWAY UNIONS ON SETTLEMENT OF ENGINEERS' DISPUTE

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): In view of the fact that apparently the engineers are now awaiting a settlement with respect to the 20,000 shopcraft people so far as their agreement is concerned, can the minister advise if any conclusion is being reached with respect to their demands at this time?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, as most hon. members know, railway negotiations are complicated. There are no less than seven groups, I think, negotiating almost simultaneously with the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National, and each collective agreement or settlement in some way is intertwined with the others. The hon. gentleman's question is a valid one. There is progress being made not only with regard to the shopcraft people, but also in the negotiations with regard to the non-operating groups, and both have an effect on the dispute involving the engineers.

Mr. Alexander: In view of the fact that there seem to be some 20 issues in the engineers dispute on which there has been no agreement, can the minister advise if he has been approached to bring in an outside mediator with respect to this very serious problem?

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, ever since I became Minister of Labour I have never had to bring in an outside mediator because I have ample confidence in the mediators at my disposal within the department.

DISPUTE BETWEEN RAILWAYS AND LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS—NEGOTIATIONS ON ISSUES NOT DEALT WITH BY CONCILIATION BOARD

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): In view of the length of time it took the conciliation board to bring in its report, and the failure of the board to make recommendations on 21 issues concerning rules and working conditions, can the minister advise if he or his officials have been involved in any way and whether or not progress is being made in the negotiations on these 21 issues?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I would hope progress is being made. I would ask the House to be a little patient in this matter because I cannot be as frank as I would like to be with respect to the negotiations going on in Montreal in case I should jeopardize their progress.

APPLICATION OF FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE LAW TO CANADIAN NATIONAL HOTELS

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): In view of the fact that a number of collective agreements are being held up pending a decision by the government with regard to the application of the federal minimum wage laws to the CNR hotels, can the minister tell the House whether a decision has been taken with respect to applying the federal minimum wage laws to the CN hotels?