

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I do not quite see how that would be appropriate at this time. Of course, any revision of the combines act would go to a committee of this house, at which time there could be a full discussion of the larger issue. However, with reference to the first part of the hon. member's question, I did point out in my first answer that it would appear that this is an offer to purchase shares of a Canadian company, an offer made by one foreign-held, multi-national corporation to another.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): I take it from the minister's answer that he must have obtained advice from legal officers either in his department or in the Department of Justice to the effect that there has been no violation of the combines act, if this deal has been consummated as suggested. Is this correct; did the minister get an opinion?

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is proper for me to give a legal opinion—

Mr. Woolliams: I did not ask for one.

Mr. Basford:—but I have naturally been in consultation with my officers this morning, and as I pointed out it does appear that the offer to purchase these shares, according to the way the offer is worded, is not a breach of the Combines Investigation Act. Naturally the director is aware of this sort of report because he follows all activities of this kind, as he has made clear in his previous annual report; and should it appear that there is or that there may be a breach of the combines act, the director can be expected to take action.

AIR CANADA**STRIKE OF MECHANICS—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON NEGOTIATIONS**

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Labour. May I ask the minister whether he has received any communications from the International Association of Machinists and/or from Air Canada requesting assistance in resuming negotiations, in the hope of reaching a settlement of the present strike?

Hon. Bryce S. Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I have received telegrams over the weekend from both parties, I believe one yesterday and one this morning, requesting assistance from the Department of Labour. If I may, I would like to expand my answer a

little and take the house into my full confidence in emphasizing that no one in this country would be more happy than the Minister of Labour to see this strike brought to an end.

Having said that, I must point out that the strike can be settled only through the free collective bargaining process and not through passage of emergency legislation in the House of Commons—at least, not until the strike does become a national emergency. Both parties have reached the present impasse because they have failed to reach agreement after six months of negotiations. Prior to the strike we did place at the disposal of the parties the services of Mr. Kelly, and subsequently those of Mr. Wilson. However the parties have not materially settled their differences.

So in answer to the question, may I say that although I have received these telegrams it is not my intention at this moment to place the Department of Labour at the disposal of both sides until I have had an opportunity to have formal discussions with both parties in order to determine whether these telegrams are anything more than an effort to convey the impression to the members of the union and the Canadian public that meaningful talks are going on, when in reality they are not.

Mr. Lewis: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I assure the minister that I am not thinking and would not think of suggesting any legislation. But since he has received these telegrams, and assuming they were sent sincerely and not for the publicity for which he fears they may have been sent, could I ask him whether the time has not arrived for him to consider seriously the appointment of some outside mediator with instructions for him to sit with the parties day and night for the next number of days in order to seek a settlement. I ask that because parties in a strike do not usually ask for assistance if they do not wish to arrive at a settlement.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, this of course is under consideration. If I can ascertain from my informal discussions that both parties in reality are willing and anxious to come to a settlement, this will be one of the avenues available to the Minister of Labour. In the meantime I recommend to both parties that they take advantage of the next couple of days and resume direct negotiations.

Mr. Ed Schreyer (Selkirk): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. According to Canadian Press wire photographs from Mont-