

*Oral Questions*

the government that additional borrowing power be given to the Corporation so that it can make this additional money available at 10 per cent to farmers who are faced with very serious financial problems. Is the minister giving this serious consideration, and when does he expect to be able to make an announcement on this matter?

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Agriculture has indicated, we have already indicated our approval in principle that the Farm Credit Corporation might be able to extend its capacity to borrow in private markets.

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**MINES AND MINING**

## REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta):** Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of State for Mines and of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I would like to direct my question to the Prime Minister. In view of the near crisis state in Canada's mining industry, with shutdowns and labour disruption now affecting more than 34,000 mine, mill and smelter workers across Canada, which multiplies to at least 160,000 employees when service jobs are included, and whereas these unprecedented cutbacks are a consequence of economic conditions which prevailed several months ago, not the current economic conditions, what specific proposals has the Minister of State for Mines offered, and what actions is the government prepared to take to remedy this serious crisis which is having a devastating impact on communities all across Canada?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, the concern of the Minister of State for Mines has been quite obvious, and she is in Calgary today addressing the Business Outlook Conference. I am sure she will be happy that I pass on to her the representation of the hon. member.

**Mr. Siddon:** Madam Speaker, I think the matter is so urgent that it needs a more direct answer than that.

## LABOUR RELATIONS

**Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta):** Madam Speaker, I am sure that the Prime Minister, being chairman of the cabinet, has some idea of what specific initiatives we can expect the government to take. What will the minister and the government do for the 10,000 striking steel workers at Inco, the 3,000 iron workers laid off in Labrador, the 6,000 unemployed asbestos and iron miners in Quebec, the 3,000 miners in Ontario, the 3,000 on the prairies and another 2,000 in Atlantic Canada—

**Madam Speaker:** Order!

**Mr. Siddon:**—and the 10,000 laid off mine workers in British Columbia? What will the government do, Madam Speaker?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member refers to my role as chairman of the cabinet. He will know that if the cabinet wants to make an announcement, it does so. I will tell the hon. member that he can expect that when we have an announcement to make, we will let the House know about it.

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**PUBLIC SERVICE**REQUEST THAT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE DEFINE  
POLITICAL RIGHTS OF PUBLIC SERVANTS

**Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board a question involving employee-employer relations in the public service, specifically the Public Service Staff Relations Board decision involving Neil Fraser, and the Supreme Court of Canada decision concerning the air traffic controllers. With respect to the first case, the Public Service Staff Relations Board case, the judgment appeared to leave unanswered the question of what is appropriate political action, excepting the case involving Neil Fraser himself. This speaks to the use of parliamentary committee to explore the matter. Has the minister considered the establishment of a parliamentary committee to see whether there could be a better definition of the political rights of public servants, involving their ability to speak out?

**Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board):** Madam Speaker, I thought the Public Service Staff Relations Board was quite helpful in that it really confirmed what has been the view expressed by myself and, I believe, by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton, that we are very much involved in an area of judgment and black and white lines cannot be drawn. Nevertheless, I have followed up the suggestions which have been made.

I indicated in the past that I personally had no great objection to parliamentary committees but that I really did not feel that their deliberations would be terribly helpful in this particular case. I raised some suggestions in a letter to the Prime Minister and discussed the matter with a number of other colleagues. I understand that the Prime Minister has looked at the matter and, in fact, has responded, but I have not yet seen his letter.

## ARBITRATION PROCEDURES

**Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is also directed to the President of the Treasury Board. Will the minister undertake to table the letter? I call to his attention my concern because his counsel said at the hearing that if public servants speak out at all, they do so at their own risk. There is no guideline whatsoever with respect to that matter, and that causes me some distress.