

Postmaster General could pursue some meaningful settlement in negotiations with the union membership?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): There is no change in the government's position. We have no intention at present of introducing any legislation which would require parliament to make a decision as to whether it wanted to interrupt the negotiations that are now going on.

STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—WILLINGNESS OF GOVERNMENT TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS ON ALL ISSUES

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, since the attitude of the negotiators with regard to any potential settlement is absolutely crucial, I should like to ask the minister, in light of his reply to another hon. member in the House yesterday that the government did not provide any ultimatum on the question of wages to the union, whether he stands by that or whether he has checked with the government chief negotiator concerning the conversation he had with the chief union negotiator on Monday night when the union asked for clarification as to whether an ultimatum was involved and the chief negotiator for the government is said to have replied:

[Translation]

You are right, this is indeed an ultimatum, there is no doubt about it.

[English]

I am not yet fluently bilingual, but even to me the translation of that means that this is an ultimatum. What I would like to ask the minister, in view of the response to the letter he has received, whether it is his attitude that the government will resume negotiations now and discuss all the questions that concern the union.

● (1120)

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the hon. gentleman. He is close to the labour movement. I would hope that the third conversation between our chief negotiator and the union was the one which was revealed. I would hope they have already taped the first two and will release the complete transcripts of them to put all three together to get the proper perspective on the only one they have released.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. He has received by hand a message from the postal workers which is only eight lines in length, and he says he has not yet had time to study it. In that letter they say they are prepared to discuss the very serious matter before the country right now in an open-ended way, and they want the government to do the same thing. I would like the minister to answer this question: is the government prepared to do so or not?

Mr. Mackasey: Not only are private telephone conversations revealed, obviously, but private correspondence as well, since the hon. member knows how many lines there were in the letter.

Mr. Broadbent: Would the minister do a service to the House and deal with the questions which are being asked, apart from making snide comments? Would he tell the

Oral Questions

House whether the government is prepared to have open-ended negotiations, or is it laying down some kind of ultimatum as a condition for those negotiations?

Mr. Mackasey: I am more than pleased to answer that. When the question is phrased precisely whether it is the position of the government that a wage package is an ultimatum, period, the answer is no. We will be ready to put a package together and to put it before the negotiating team of the union after we have had a chance to analyse the letter in relation to the press release which was simultaneously released to the press gallery.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

REQUEST FOR PROGRAM TO REDUCE MORTGAGE INTEREST RATES

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs.

With reference to a reply the Minister of Finance gave to a question I asked him last week and in which he indicated that the Minister of State for Urban Affairs would be introducing programs aimed at reducing interest rates in specific cases, could the Minister of State for Urban Affairs advise the House to which particular areas these programs will apply and also when the relevant legislation will be introduced?

[English]

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am not at liberty to indicate the precise nature of the programs themselves, but we will continue to support low and moderate income families for low-cost but very good housing. I hope to be able to make announcements on the program itself at the earliest possible date in November, but it is taking a great deal of work to pull the program together and to update it. However, I can assure the hon. member that it is proceeding with all haste.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM—PROSPECTS FOR CO-OPERATION BY PROVINCES

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance. In view of the indications from the government recently that it expected to have a much clearer idea of the attitude of the provinces toward the anti-inflationary program after the meeting with the provincial ministers of finance, which has taken place in the last couple of days, can the minister tell the House how many, and if possible, which provinces indicated they are prepared to go along firmly and categorically with the government's program, and specifically are prepared to enter into agreements with the federal government to put sectors of provincial jurisdiction under the proposed federal administration?