

SETTLEMENT WITH CUPW—COST TO GOVERNMENT

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Madam Speaker, my question is to the President of the Treasury Board. It arises from a press release put out by him and the Postmaster General yesterday in which the following is stated:

Mr. Ouellet said the over-all wage and benefits package represents a 10.43 per cent increase in expenditures over the life of the contract.

That is, the CUPW contract settled between the Treasury Board and that union. Unfortunately, this morning the Postmaster General's mind went blank when I asked him what was the dollar amount represented by the 10.43 per cent. He suggested that the President of the Treasury Board could give me that figure. Would the President of the Treasury Board give me the figure?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity. I also received a press release, issued by the hon. member, and it would appear that his mind went blank when he wrote it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Johnston: I am surprised that he has the courage to rise from his seat and put a question to me today after issuing such a document, which is a complete distortion of the facts of this settlement. I can only suggest that he does not understand how these wage settlements are calculated, or else he had some help with his arithmetic from the opposition House leader.

● (1500)

The specific answer to the hon. gentleman's question, which I gave yesterday, is that the cost of the settlement is \$36,068,-232 that is inclusive of COLA, cost of living index adjustment and improved fringe benefits, and it is calculated on the base of a straight-time payroll plus COLA, which is \$345,829,659.

Mr. Stevens: My supplementary question to the President of the Treasury Board is this. Would the President of the Treasury Board indicate why—if, in fact, the extra cost is \$36,068,-000—Treasury Board's last suggested mandate to the Post Office, certainly when we were in office, shows the maximum cost to be \$26,100,000, and that anything over that would require a larger Post Office budget? Where did the \$10 million get left on the table during the negotiations, and why?

Mr. Johnston: Once again, Madam Speaker, the hon. gentleman was my predecessor in the Treasury Board, and apparently he does not understand his own estimates, because the amount included in the estimates for the settlement was not \$26 million.

Privilege—Mr. Hnatyshyn

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

MR. HNATYSHYN—STATEMENT MADE BY POSTMASTER GENERAL DURING QUESTION PERIOD—RULING BY MADAM SPEAKER

Madam Speaker: Yesterday, the hon. member for Saskatchewan West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) rose on a question of privilege concerning certain words used during question period by the hon. Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet). As I stated yesterday, hon. members are entirely free to choose the procedure they prefer in this House, as long as they abide by the rules, whether they proceed under Standing Order 43, by asking oral questions or by using any other procedure. I would add that, of course, only the Chair can determine whether a motion is in order and whether the procedure used in the House is appropriate.

As for the question raised by the hon. member for Saskatchewan West, I must say that this does not constitute a question of privilege, but rather a question of order and decorum. Standing Order 12 stipulates that it is the duty of the Speaker to preserve order and decorum in the House. This is why I reserved the right to examine the official report to determine whether the hon. Postmaster General had indeed used the words suggested by some members in this House. I have therefore checked what was said, and I must say that I have not found anything in the words that he used that might be considered as strictly unparliamentary even though the hon. minister went very far in what is allowed. I should remind him and other members that that type of intervention could quite easily lead to a lack of decorum and order in the House. I imagine that this is not exactly the image we want to project of the House of Commons.

However, it is interesting to note that Bourinot, on page 363 of its fourth edition, considers that it is not acceptable to say of another member that he lacks courage. On the other hand, on page 11 of the fifth edition of *Beauchesne* it is stated that the term "coward" has been judged to be totally parliamentary. Of course, this word was not used by the minister, but some members suggested that he used an equivalent expression.

I should remind the House that these liberties taken with language occur on both sides of the House. For instance, yesterday, the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) also used certain terms which might not be quite acceptable in describing the comments made previously in the House by the hon. Postmaster General. I therefore take the opportunity afforded by this question of privilege to appeal to the spirit of moderation which should obviously prevail in all proceedings of the House.