

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

NEGOTIATIONS RESPECTING FIVE DAY
DELIVERY

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question of immediate urgency to the Postmaster General. It has to do with the implementation of the five day delivery. Will the minister undertake to make an early statement on motions outlining the progress of negotiations which were to resume this morning. Also, can he assure members of the Canadian public that they will not again become the victims of controversy or conflict between the department and its employees.

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, a good many changes are going on inside the Post Office Department. I can assure hon. members of the house that I discussed these changes fully with the leaders of the two unions involved—we had a long discussion earlier this week—and, as the hon. member has suggested, negotiations are still proceeding.

Mr. Macquarrie: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since the minister has been so communicative will he indicate if the government intends to table the initial report of the task force which, in a heartening way, showed how the post office could save \$50 million yearly.

Mr. Kierans: It is the report, Mr. Speaker, of a task force within the department and is a preliminary report only. I was pleased with the projected results contained in the report, but I want to satisfy myself that what is promised in it can be carried out.

Mr. Mac T. McCutcheon (Lambton-Kent): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I wish to ask the Postmaster General whether, in view of increasing numbers of complaints about slow delivery and poor post office service, he will assure the house that before entering other communications fields, such as telephone services, he will make sure that postal service in this country is again raised to acceptable levels.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest that the question as asked is argumentative.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In the discussions going on with the postal unions has the department refused to assure union representatives that permanent employees of the department will not be laid off while

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casual employees continue to work for the department?

Mr. Kierans: Mr. Speaker, the department has refused nothing and has made no promises. As I say, we are negotiating, and until a final meeting of minds is reached we will not give away any advantages we might have.

Mr. Orlikow: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister assure permanent employees of the department that none of them will be laid off while temporary employees are kept on strength?

Mr. Kierans: Mr. Speaker, I want to find employment for all people who work in the post office. I realize that in cutting down to five day weeks we shall wind up with excess man-hours. It therefore behooves me to find alternative jobs for those who will be affected, as well as to provide additional services to the people of Canada that are economic and justified. We have all this very much in mind, Mr. Speaker.

ESTATE TAX

REQUEST FOR PRESENTATION OF LEGISLATION

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Finance. In the very near future does he expect to present to the house the estate tax bill? I ask that particularly because strong pressure is being brought to bear on the government from within the Liberal caucus to present the bill in its present form and because there is strong support for the bill within the Liberal party.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The first part of the hon. member's question is in order, but the second part is out of order.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): The minister can answer half a question.

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should simply like to say that the bill is a great bill which is good for the people of Canada. I had hoped to present the bill tomorrow, Friday, but I probably will not be able to until Monday because of printing difficulties and the translation. It is ready now.

Mr. Hees: As a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, has the minister been down to his constituency recently and talked to the people there? If he has done so he would not be able to make the answer that he has.