

*Inquiries of the Ministry***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****POST OFFICE****ACTION TO AVERT NATIONAL STRIKE**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I wish to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister relating to the imminence of a strike in the postal service. What action, if any, is the government taking to avert such a strike?

Hon. G. J. McIlraith (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the matter of staff relations and disputes over wages and other matters comes under the responsibility of the President of the Treasury Board. I ask my colleague to deal with the question.

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, as members are aware, a conciliation board was appointed which produced a non-unanimous report. At the instigation of the government negotiations were resumed on the basis of the conciliation board report. These negotiations occupied two days during the course of the current week. The Council of Postal Unions have indicated that they would not be available for further discussions as they wished to consult their membership directly. As a consequence, these discussions are not now continuing. The Council of Postal Unions is currently discussing the conciliation board report with its membership. This consultation will be continuing today, over the weekend and into the early part of next week. The Council of Postal Unions is now seeking a mandate from its membership. Consequently they are not available for continuing discussions.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I must first say that I was a little taken aback by the Solicitor General giving more information than he usually does when he answers a question.

Mr. Bell: He is having a lot of fun these days.

Mr. Stanfield: I ask the President of the Treasury Board what measures he anticipates taking when the representatives of the unions are prepared to resume discussions? Also, what contact is being maintained with the representatives of the postal unions with a view to resuming discussions at the earliest possible time in order to avoid a strike which would obviously have disastrous consequences for the country?

[Mr. Hopkins.]

Mr. Drury: We have an undertaking from the Council of Postal Unions to resume these negotiations next week, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stanfield: Can the President of the Treasury Board give the House a firm assurance that a strike will not take place before further discussions between the representatives of the government and the representatives of the postal unions concerned?

Mr. Drury: We have been so assured by the Council of Postal Unions.

POSSIBLE NATIONAL STRIKE—INCLUSION OF JOB SECURITY AS BARGAINING ISSUE

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I address a supplementary question to the President of the Treasury Board. Is the minister in a position to confirm that when the postal workers and the government return to the bargaining table the government will be prepared to bargain over the question of job security?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): The government is prepared, and always has been prepared, to bargain over any bargainable issue.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Will the government agree that this is a bargainable issue?

Mr. Drury: As I indicated in the House the other day, job security is a rather imprecise term. Some elements of what is described as job security are bargainable and are being bargained over. Others are not.

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): May I address a further question to the President of the Treasury Board based on the fact that whether there is a strike or a lockout lasting one day or many months, eventually the employer and the employees must get together. In the meetings the minister has told us will take place, will the government take the attitude that a decision must finally be reached, and on that basis try to reach an understanding in order that disruption and disaster may be avoided?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member's supplementary sounded argumentative.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Winch: It may have sounded argumentative but I think the principle is a sound one to follow in Canada.