

*Oral Questions*STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON  
TAKING SECRET BALLOT ON FINAL OFFER

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Last week the Postmaster General indicated he was prepared to at least give consideration to establishing some mechanism for a secret ballot on this proposal. Has the government reached any decision with regard to this? How long does the Postmaster General propose to allow the tie-up in service to continue before he makes a decision with regard to this matter?

**Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General):** As we heard earlier, Mr. Speaker, there has already been overwhelming opinion in the House, not from all parties—

**Mr. Baldwin:** From the democratic, not the New Democratic.

**Mr. Mackasey:**—suggesting that this democratic right be provided to the workers as it is in civic, provincial and federal elections. As to when the government should move, as the hon. member knows, this is a very difficult question. It is a question of weighing the democratic right of the workers to remain on strike against the public interest. In a matter of several weeks, the House might be seized with the debate on the issue as to whether we have reached that particular point.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think I was clear in the question I put to the Postmaster General. He had difficulty understanding it. I will put it to him in this way. The Postmaster General and members on the government side having indicated a few minutes ago that they favour a secret ballot or vote being taken under the direction and supervision of the Public Service Staff Relations Board, does the minister and the government propose to do anything about this?

**Mr. Mackasey:** The reason I favour it is because of the clear distinction between the government and the Public Service Staff Relations Board which is an independent body set up to supervise and administer industrial relations within the public service. This body is independent of government. Therefore, if it were to propose or initiate this move, we would frankly be free of any charge of interfering in the democratic rights of a particular union.

STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—CONSIDERATION OF NEEDS OF  
SMALL BUSINESSMEN

**Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Postmaster General. In answers on Friday of last week, the Postmaster General claimed that he placed greater value on democracy than the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. He explained how business and other people were keeping the mail moving. What consideration is the minister giving to the democratic right of the unheard majority of Canadians who cannot afford courier service for their postal needs and cannot afford to communicate their needs to the government by telegram?

**Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General):** Mr. Speaker, I have great sympathy with the question the hon.

[Mr. Mackasey.]

member has posed. It is all a matter of judgment—we cannot become too technical. It is an exercise which has to take place periodically when there are strikes on the railways, on the waterfronts and post offices when the private rights of individuals become public wrongs, and any government has an obligation to take action. It becomes a matter of judgment as to just when that moment is appropriate, and naturally the government would prefer to err on the side of caution in denying the rights of workers to be on strike legally as long as we can tolerate the effects without any real visible damage to the economy in general, though knowing fully well the impact on the fortunes of certain individuals.

STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—ALLEGED RELUCTANCE OF  
GOVERNMENT TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS

**Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra):** Since the government has asserted that any wage settlement which exceeds the government's wage guidelines will be subject to approval by the Anti-Inflation Board, and since the union has stated its desire to return to the bargaining table, can the Postmaster General tell the House why he shows such reluctance to resume negotiations as evidenced by his statement last week that there is nothing more to negotiate?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General):** Before our socialist friends get excited, they should be making noises against Mr. Barrett who has legislated all labour legislation out of existence in his province. I have not said there is nothing left to negotiate. I said there was nothing left to negotiate in the \$1.70 area or in the length of the contract. There may be other issues of a non-monetary nature which can be negotiated. Reading the newspapers and listening to television one gathers the impression that there seems to be a change of heart on the part of the union in the last day or so; they have indicated to the press that they are prepared to resume negotiations and we are prepared to do the same thing as long as it is fully understood that \$1.70 is the limit they can possibly achieve in a 30-month settlement.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATING  
CHANGE IN COLA CLAUSE

**Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby):** I have a question for the Postmaster General. Can he expand the answer he just gave, particularly the statement that the government is not prepared to move any further on monetary issues? Does this mean, for example, that the government will make no change in its present position on the COLA clause question?

**Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General):** We could not morally do anything with regard to the COLA clause by reason of the fact that it exists, or would exist in this collective agreement, only because it is in the letter carriers' agreement. More important, it is exactly the formula recommended by the chairman of the conciliation board, a man who was chosen by the union. I do not know anybody