

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

report. I say that the privileges of the members of this house in particular have been affected, in that the house has had to deal with this particular question all along. May I say, with due respect to Your Honour's decision a moment ago, that this situation has arisen as a result of the unavailability of the report at the time of the discussion prior to today in the house.

Therefore I say that at the moment there is a question of privilege as to why the house and all those concerned have been denied this report. The question is whether the report has been delayed this long in order to relieve the minister involved from having to answer any question in the house on a point on which the ministry and its officials have been found to be guilty of dereliction in not living up to the standards laid down in labour relations.

I therefore put it to Your Honour that we just cannot be fobbed off continually, letting the question be avoided in one way or another. At this point in the session the whole matter should be dealt with.

**Mr. Kierans:** On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, relating to the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Edmonton West. I wish to repeat that I have no knowledge at all of the reasons for which the reports were not released until just now. I have been as anxious as anyone else to obtain them. The implication in the statement of the hon. member for Edmonton West is that I have been afraid to face this house. Mr. Speaker, with an opposition like that, what is there to be afraid of?

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

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** We shall see.

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, I am not asking the Minister of Communications to be afraid of anything. I am asking him to be honest and straightforward with this house.

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

**Mr. Lewis:** In view of the fact that one report of the adjudicator granted the grievances of five workers, and since other grievances may fall within the same realm of facts, and since this means additional pay for those workers, will the minister undertake that the five workers concerned and others in a like situation will receive that pay retroactive to May 15, the date of the award.

**Mr. Kierans:** I have already instructed the officials of the department to contact the leaders of the unions and of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers to determine the best way of proceeding as a result of this report.

**Mr. Lewis:** May I also ask this question: in view of the fact that the other report, dated April 30, found that government agencies—more the Treasury Board, perhaps, than the Post Office—had violated section 40 of the agreement by not consulting the union prior to making up their minds with respect to changes in working conditions, will the minister now revert to the conditions which obtained prior to February 9 and negotiate with the union as the agreement requires?

**Mr. Kierans:** I am glad the hon. member raised that question. There were three principal conclusions reached in the report. I should like to quote from the adjudicator: "The employer, under the collective bargaining agreement, had the right to implement single mail processing." Now comes point No. 2, and again I quote: "The error lay in the method of implementation." The third point is this: Both parties erred. I quote: "It is held as a fact that neither the representatives of the employer nor the union were mentally disposed to engage in meaningful consultation."

On May 15—and you have already referred to this, Mr. Speaker—I said something along the same lines in this house:

There has been on both sides perhaps a tendency to interpret that contract too literally; to look at the words than to treat it as a human document.

**Mr. Lewis:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You ruled in your judgment that the motion of the hon. member for Hillsborough could not be entertained and that a debate should not take place at this time. I want to say that the Postmaster General has taken sentences out of context; that the adjudicator went further than to say that both parties were responsible.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** I wonder whether I might interrupt the hon. member. I might say that *prima facie* the point raised by the hon. member is well taken. I did not know at what time to interrupt the Postmaster General. At the same time the question asked by the hon. member for York South in a way prompted the lengthy reply. I suggest to hon. members that there should not be debate at this time, that questions should be short and the answers equally brief.