

Inquiries of the Ministry

the time-consuming settlement of individual grievances, as is now his policy.

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to inform the house that whereas there were more than 1,500 letter carriers off duty yesterday, there are less than 700—in fact, 649—who have not reported for work today.

To reply directly to the question of the Leader of the Opposition, I should like to say that the Post Office has waived all preliminary steps in the grievance procedure. The relevant documents are now in the hands of the union for approval, and as soon as this approval is given we can immediately proceed to name an adjudicator to rule on the outstanding grievances. This is something we have wanted for some considerable time. I am delighted that the discussions have finally reached this stage. I would hope that the people who are striking today will return to work tomorrow, so that the adjudication procedure can proceed in an atmosphere of serenity.

Mr. Stanfield: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. We are all, of course, interested in seeing things returned to normality. I assume from what the minister said that the procedure adopted relates to individual grievances. The question I asked was whether the minister would not moderate his policy so as to refer the root causes of dissatisfaction to third party mediation, rather than resort to the time-consuming procedure he is now following, which may settle individual grievances but may not actually restore peace to the operations of his department.

Mr. Kierans: Mr. Speaker, the individual grievances we have selected are those that bear on the root causes or the root differences between the unions and ourselves. Therefore when the adjudicator pronounces on one of these representative cases he will undoubtedly be giving a decision that will be binding in the more general case on both sides.

Mr. Stanfield: I have one further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I should like to ask the Postmaster General whether it is his intention to proceed with prosecutions, as he has indicated, or whether he is going to seek a settlement.

Mr. Kierans: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why I am extremely hopeful that the strikers will return to work tomorrow is that the continuance of illegal strikes would obviously make prosecution inevitable. It would

[Mr. Stanfield.]

not be inevitable, given the decision of the national executive of the letter carriers union on Sunday night ordering all their workers back to work, which is what Mr. Décarie did. Under those circumstances I think that my colleagues and I will review the situation.

In the meantime, what I said on Friday stands, that is, first that we were applying to the staff relations board for a ruling that this strike is illegal and is against the people and the government of Canada, and second that if they did declare the strike to be illegal we could have the consent of the board to prosecute. That was the position on Friday night.

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a supplementary question to the Postmaster General. In view of the fact that the Postmaster General has stated that he has been trying for three weeks to get the postal workers to submit this dispute to a third party for adjudication, may I ask him whom he advised of his willingness to take this step, whether it was done orally or in writing, and when it was done. If it was by means of correspondence, would the minister be prepared to table the correspondence in the house?

Mr. Kierans: I advised a number of local unions during my trip out west that if they did not agree with the idea of eliminating the additional sorting period at one o'clock in the afternoon they should adopt the legal procedure of filing a grievance. I also repeated it before a joint meeting of the two national executives held at the Beacon Arms Hotel about a month ago—I cannot give the exact date—at the time when we discussed the implementation of the new system, and I told both national executives in the presence of both presidents that the proper way of attempting to upset this was not in a test of force, one side attempting to blackmail the other, but to proceed through the legal means that this government gave them when they gave them the right to strike.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a supplementary question to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the fact that initial proceedings have been taken toward taking action against certain postal employee representatives, with a view to prosecution and in view of the harmful effect this will have upon employer-employee relations between the Postal Department and its employees, may I ask the Prime Minister whether he would intervene to ensure that