

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): A further supplementary. While everybody might have full regard for Mr. Justice Berger they do not have the same confidence in the government not to interfere with his inquiry.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

INFLATION—NECESSITY OF PARTICIPATION OF MAJOR UNION IN CONSENSUS PROGRAM OF RESTRAINT—POSSIBILITY OF PROPOSALS ON EMPLOYMENT GROWTH AND JOB SECURITY

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, a question for the Acting Minister of Finance. Since the government recognizes that no one group will co-operate unless it knows others will be exercising similar restraint, is it the position of the government that the participation of the major unions such as the United Steel Workers would be a pre-condition to the consensus program?

Hon. C. M. Drury (Acting Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of issue that is currently being discussed. To lay down, in the form of ultimata, what people must do or must not do would not help the process of trying to find a consensus.

Mr. Fraser: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell the House whether the government has presented any policy with regard to employment growth and job security for the consensus period and, if so, have any proposals been prepared on this matter to be part of a consensus package?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, obviously there are a number of possible scenarios which are not being prepared, projected or discussed in detail but rather there is a process of seeking consensus on general principles such as was enunciated by the Minister of Finance to the first ministers' conference and subsequently communicated to the House.

INQUIRY WHETHER QUESTIONS OF CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS BEING ANSWERED

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Acting Minister of Finance regarding the consensus. Can the Acting Minister of Finance tell the House whether the questions of the Canadian Labour Congress regarding low income workers and other important matters have been answered or will be answered and not held up until the return of the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance?

Hon. C. M. Drury (Acting Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in respect of specific questions, we are working on these to find answers as quickly as possible.

Oral Questions

POST OFFICE

LETTER CARRIERS—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON POSSIBILITY OF SIGNING CONTRACT

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Postmaster General if he can confirm reports that the long slide to chaos in the Post Office Department, if I may use a quote from a leading newspaper on the subject, "has been arrested" and that based on the element of goodwill that the Postmaster General's involvement in the negotiations has engendered, a contract has been signed with the Letter Carriers' Union of Canada?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that less than an hour ago we were able to reach a collective agreement with the Letter Carriers' Union.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1430)

Mr. Mackasey: Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, in order to reduce—

An hon. Member: Is the price right?

Mr. Mackasey: Somebody opposite asked if the price is right. Considering that the Post Office workers are among the lowest paid workers in the Public Service, I am dissatisfied when somebody over on the other side makes innuendoes about the price being right. These are the most underpaid people in the Public Service and I think the settlement they got, based on the terms of the report, is a fair one.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I will do something I rarely do in the House, because I am as political as the opposition. I should like to say this: The hon. member for Brandon-Souris played a considerable role in convincing certain members on the negotiating team about the fairness of the settlement and in shortening the period of negotiation.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Brandon-Souris, on a supplementary.

Mr. Dinsdale: Mr. Speaker, if I may risk a supplementary.

An hon. Member: It's a commercial.

REQUEST MINISTER CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS WITH POSTAL WORKERS ON ISSUES OF CASUAL WORKERS AND AUTOMATION

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): I would carry the discussion one stage further and ask the hon. gentleman if he is now going to move to the other side of the puzzle and continue the same vigorous negotiations with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, giving particular emphasis to the issues of automation and casual workers.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General): Yes, Mr. Speaker. With the co-operation of my close friend, the President of the Treasury Board, I do not think we will in any way be impeded in obtaining a fair settlement which