

Inquiries of the Ministry

Prime Minister whether it is the policy of the government, at a very critical stage of the negotiations, to have the minister of the department concerned, the Postmaster General, express a point of view substantially at odds with the point of view being expressed in the negotiations by the negotiators for the government? Is this the policy of the government?

Mr. Kierans: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister seeks the floor on a question of privilege.

Mr. Kierans: Mr. Speaker, as I have said in interviews, post offices across the world have had considerable difficulty in recent years and this stems from the fact that governments have never sought to invest in either the human resources or the material resources in recent generations in the way they should have, that a great many of the working conditions, as pointed out by Mr. Justice Montpetit, have since improved, that pay conditions are a lot better, but that post offices do not offer the same opportunities for advancement and creative contributions that other lines of endeavour do, and that we in the Post Office are endeavouring to modernize these things and to project this picture—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I again ask the Acting Prime Minister whether it is the policy of the government, at a critical stage of the negotiations, to have the minister of the department concerned, the Postmaster General, express views substantially different from those which the Acting Prime Minister says are being expressed by the negotiators for the government at the bargaining table?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the Postmaster General speaking I found myself in agreement with what he said, and I do not think this will in any way hamper the negotiations that are under way.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for York South.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton West on a question of privilege.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege to indicate

to the Postmaster General and to the Acting Prime Minister that those were not the remarks the Postmaster General made in connection with conditions in the Post Office, as his speech was reported and on which the questions have been based. This has been a straight prevarication from the truth.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Edmonton West knows very well that it is difficult to raise as a question of privilege the accuracy of reported statements. This, of course, as hon. members will see immediately, is the difficulty about asking questions on statements ministers are reported to have made outside the House. We become involved in disputes as to what was said and what was not said. The Postmaster General rose on a question of privilege, the hon. member for Edmonton West also rose on a question of privilege, and it seems to me that the situation generally has not been assisted to any great extent. I think it would be advisable if I were to recognize the hon. member for York South.

Mr. Stanfield: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I suggest, with great respect, that there is no difficulty because the Postmaster General really did not deny what I had attributed to him.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

POSSIBLE NATIONAL STRIKE—POSITION OF
GOVERNMENT NEGOTIATORS—RESUMPTION
OF NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the President of the Treasury Board a question relating to the negotiations. It arises out of an answer of the Acting Prime Minister. I think it is important both for the people and the postal employees to know the facts, and the Acting Prime Minister may or may not know them. Has the Treasury Board in the negotiations taken the position of supporting the recommendations of the chairman of the conciliation board, Judge Lippe, or has it taken the position of supporting the recommendations of its representative on the conciliation board, Keith Campbell?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Both, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lewis: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the minister's answer and in view of the fact there is a very considerable difference between the wage recommen-