

HOUSING

REQUEST TOP PRIORITY BE GIVEN CAPE BRETON COUNTY—
ALLEGATION GLACE BAY BUILDING PROJECT WAS TO HAVE
STARTED IN 1972

Mr. Andy Hogan (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Urban Affairs in charge of housing. In view of the fact that the capable regional director of Central Mortgage and Housing in Halifax has informed me in a letter dated May 15 that "housing conditions in Cape Breton industrial area are among the worst in Canada and in the province of Nova Scotia", would the minister use his authority to insist that designation of target areas in Nova Scotia under the federal-provincial agreement give top priority to the county of Cape Breton?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I accept the representation of the hon. member. I will be in Halifax on Wednesday and I will discuss this matter with my provincial colleagues and certainly give it the high priority that it deserves.

Mr. Hogan: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would the minister explain why Mr. Teron the president of CMHC said in Halifax yesterday that "there is only so much money to go around and housing will have to compete with other priorities?" Will the minister tell us if Mr. Teron was stating government policy on housing?

Mr. Danson: Mr. Speaker, he was stating commonsense, as he always does.

Mr. Hogan: A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. My interpretation of commonsense is a little different. Would the minister inform the Minister of Finance before he introduces his June mini-budget that the present 1975 CMHC building program in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia is but a fulfilment of a project that was to have been started in, and was allotted for, the year 1972, three years ago?

Mr. Danson: Mr. Speaker, I will look into the situation that the hon. member describes. I know our direct programs are moving extremely quickly but if there are some difficulties here I will be pleased to look into them.

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[Translation]

POST OFFICE

POSSIBILITY OF GENERAL STRIKE TO SUPPORT WORKERS IN
MONTREAL

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Postmaster General.

Can he tell us what he intends to do about the threat of the president of the Union of Postal Workers, who is calling a general postal strike in support of the Montreal postal workers?

[English]

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, the press release that was just issued a few moments ago by the national executive of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers deserves a short answer which

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would be unparliamentary. To suggest that there are 400 policemen inside the Montreal post office is a pure fabrication of the worst possible type designed to inflame the members across Canada and bring on a wildcat strike. The matter has no foundation; it is malicious and it is unreasonable and, in so far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, it is unworthy of anybody who is the head of a trade union in this country.

• (1420)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: I think history will prove that I am a better friend of the postal workers than their national executive, and I will not be intimidated by such statements into rescinding the suspensions and dismissals as a result of unlawful actions. I am glad they are now rediscovering the terms of their own collective agreement.

ALLEGED DELAYS IN GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE—
GOVERNMENT ACTION

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, could the Postmaster General inform the House whether he is dealing with the complaints in view of the suggestion that the person in the province of Quebec who has the responsibility of hearing fourth level grievances has resigned and has not been replaced, which has resulted in preventing representative hearings of grievances?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, it is significant that finally, after two months, the union is now finding some fault with the grievance procedure which for two months they have refused to recognize as a lawful method of solving legitimate differences of opinion. The constant references to Quebec, French Canada and French, and the fact that the Postmaster General is English, by this union is nothing but a deliberate attempt to create the impression that in some way, shape or form the postal workers in the province of Quebec get less justice than the postal workers across Canada, which is in fact untrue and unworthy of that particular union.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: I have asked to see if there are delays in the processing of grievances. If there are, then this matter could have been brought to my attention two months ago when I invited the union to use this as the method of solving legitimate complaints. If there are delays, we will do everything in our power to expedite the grievance procedure, which at times does bog down not only for French-speaking Quebecers, but for English-speaking Quebecers and other Canadians as well. If that operation in the public service needs improving, then it should be improved. One of the handicaps I have to work with as the Postmaster General can be related to interference of other departments. Nonetheless, this grievance could have been brought to my attention two months ago had the union taken advantage of certain provisions in their own collective agreement.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!