

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

STEPS TO IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS
AND AVERT STRIKE

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Prime Minister whether in view of the rather shocking revelations made in the report of Mr. Justice Andre Montpetit with regard to health and safety standards for Post Office Department employees, the government intends to take immediate action to entirely remove these injustices so as to obviate and prevent a probable strike by the postal officers?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the report was received by me the day before yesterday, and the matter is under urgent consideration.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Would the Prime Minister frankly tell the house what is being done to bring about settlement of the threatened strike? Surely we do not have to wait until the strike happens for action to increase the 6 per cent agreed upon for the postal workers, inadequate as it is.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, the cabinet committee is meeting to deal with this matter, and there is a meeting of treasury board officials to deal with the matter tomorrow. I can think of nothing more unhelpful to a solution of this problem than to discuss the negotiations from day to day.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister a related question in the hope that if the Prime Minister does consider the suggestion it might be of assistance at the present time. Would the Prime Minister and his colleagues consider immediately commencing bargaining with the postal employees unions on the recommendations which Mr. Justice Montpetit has made in order that they can play a part in getting rid of the appalling conditions revealed in the report?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, these recommendations are being given immediate and urgent consideration, and we would wish to deal with those who are particularly concerned with them as quickly as possible.

Inquiries of the Ministry

BILINGUALISM AND BICULTURALISM

INQUIRY AS TO REPORT OF ROYAL
COMMISSION

On the orders of the day:

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Prime Minister relates to former questions and concerns another royal commission. Can the Prime Minister inform us when he expects to receive the report of the royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker. I have been urging on the commission the desirability of making their report with the least possible delay, but I cannot give any indication when that report will be received; I hope before not too long.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

BRITISH COLUMBIA—REQUEST FOR DELAY
IN CLOSING OF RADAR STATION

On the orders of the day:

Hon. E. D. Fulton (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Minister of National Defence with regard to the recent announcement of the closing of the radar base at Puntzi mountain, British Columbia. In view of the great difficulty and hardship on civilian employees not only with respect to obtaining alternative employment at this time of year but by reason of the impossibility of arranging to dispose of their houses at this remote spot, will the minister reconsider the decision to close the base or postpone the closing at least until after the winter?

Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I would be agreeable to referring this question to the staff for consideration but from information I have had in the past I suspect that it would not be convenient, in view of the plans of the department, to postpone closure. In any event, I do regret any inconvenience that has been caused to the residents as a result of a move at this time.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Has the Minister of National Defence received through the appropriate channels any memos which indicate that tradesmen employed in the armed forces in the construction and engineering branch are dissatisfied with the recently announced increase in pay?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I doubt whether that is a supplementary question. I suggest