

**Mr. Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, that question, in effect, answers itself. Obviously, the Minister of Finance is not satisfied. That is why we brought in the employment tax credit program which involves about \$200 million. That is just one more program in the government's armament against the ogre of unemployment.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** Too little, too late.

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## FINANCE

### STATUS OF DEPUTY MINISTER

**Mr. Bill Kempling (Halton-Wentworth):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Can the minister advise whether Mr. Tom Shoyama, the Deputy Minister of Finance, has resigned?

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance):** No, Mr. Speaker, he is not resigning. He is working with me, and his work is very good.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Alexander:** For how long?

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## POST OFFICE

### REMOVAL OF TELEPHONES FROM RURAL POST OFFICES

**Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Postmaster General. I would like to ask the Postmaster General why the Post Office is going back to the pre-Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell era in communications and removing telephones from rural post offices.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. J.-Gilles Lamontagne (Postmaster General):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer this question but it seems quite irrelevant to me since the telephone does not come under the jurisdiction of the Post Office. Nevertheless, I would like to ask the hon. member for Brandon-Souris to be more positive in his questions. I cannot see any purpose in asking questions about what happened at the Post Office perhaps 100 or 125 years ago. We are now trying to create a new climate in the Post Office. We are trying to establish more open communications with our employees, and I would ask for the opposition's co-operation in that effort so as to avoid the worst and make the Post Office more efficient throughout Canada.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dinsdale:** Mr. Speaker, with a statement like that, I can understand why the Post Office is in trouble. Inasmuch as the Post Office is in the communications business and improved communications are essential to the restoration of our rural communities, particularly in reversing the shift of population

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to urban areas, a process which has been gradually eroding rural communities and the family farm, why is the Post Office Department constantly downgrading its services while at the same time increasing postal rates, rather than pursuing the more positive policy of increasing business and revenues by improving service?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. This is a fascinating subject to raise, but surely it is one of argumentation and not a question. The hon. member for Yorkton-Melville.

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## RAILWAYS

### PROPOSED ABANDONMENT OF RAIL LINES ON PRAIRIES

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville):** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Transport and it concerns the question of rail line abandonment. Because of the recommendation made by the Prairie Rail Action Committee to abandon some 121 miles of rail line, there is now a great deal of concern in many of the communities which are being studied by the PRAC. The communities have been asking whether it is the intention of the minister to instruct the PRAC to consult fully with the communities affected even to the extent of holding hearings in these communities.

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, the Prairie Rail Action Committee is analysing the lines which the Hall commission did not resolve in terms of their future. It is consulting with a number of additional groups on facts and figures, but is relying heavily on work done by the Hall commission. When recommendations are made by the Prairie Rail Action Committee and the nature of those recommendations is such that the positive parts of them favour maintaining and making lines permanent and upgrading lines, those recommendations can be—and have been, in some cases—implemented by the government forthwith.

What we might call the negative part of any recommendation, that is, that a line be abandoned at a certain point in time, can only be referred to the Canadian Transport Commission, and that commission would in the ordinary course have full hearings involving the communities. There is, therefore, an important message to the communities that they are very likely to have an opportunity either before the Canadian Transport Commission, or in due course before a western arm of that commission, to make their views known before any adverse decision is taken.

**Mr. Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Transport knows, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has criticized the criteria being used by the PRAC. For example, it is recommended that lines with traffic densities as high as 90,000 bushels per mile be abandoned. I wonder whether the minister can tell the House just what criteria are being used and if it is his intention to instruct the PRAC to change its criteria so that they will be more in line with what Hall was originally thinking.