

*Inquiries of the Ministry***LABOUR RELATIONS****DISPUTE BETWEEN TREASURY BOARD AND ELECTRICAL WORKERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION—PROSPECTS FOR SETTLEMENT**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board. In light of the uncertainty about the progress, if any, toward settlement of the air technicians dispute and the uncertainty surrounding the situation, can the President of the Treasury Board tell the House briefly what the government's position is, what progress is being made and what the prospects are for early settlement?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman obviously does not want to know the whole story and, indeed, this is not the occasion. I do not think it is appropriate to discuss in the House what the course of negotiations, which according to past practice have always been private, should be. I can say, however, that the parties are meeting again with the mediator in an endeavour to make progress.

DISPUTE BETWEEN TREASURY BOARD AND ELECTRICAL WORKERS—EXTENT OF AIR SERVICE DISRUPTION

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Minister of Transport could indicate to the House specifically the extent to which regular air services are being disrupted by the dispute between the air technicians and Treasury Board?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): That varies, Mr. Speaker, across the country. Some of the designated employees have returned to their positions in various locations. We have yesterday's report, as of about an hour ago, indicating that at some airports the number of employees was 100 per cent of normal and this declined to about 50 per cent at the lowest point, the two most difficult areas being within the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. I would be very glad to indicate the separate airports to the Leader of the Opposition if he wished.

DISPUTE BETWEEN TREASURY BOARD AND ELECTRICAL WORKERS—CONTINGENCY PLAN TO RESTORE AIR SERVICE

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): I have a further supplementary question directed to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the obvious serious effect the dispute is having upon air traffic and also the concern about air safety, has the Prime Minister given any consideration to changing the method by which it is being handled? Has he given any consideration to taking it out of the hands of the Treasury Board and, specifically, has the Prime Minister any contingency plans for getting the technicians back to work and the airplanes flying again satisfactorily?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we always have contingency plans but we are not about to put them into operation at this time.

[Mr. Olson.]

DISPUTE BETWEEN TREASURY BOARD AND ELECTRICAL WORKERS—NATURE OF GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board. Without asking for the details of the discussions, can he say whether the discussions are now being conducted on the basis of the recommendations of the conciliation board or whether the Treasury Board has made any new proposals to the air technicians?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of proposals and counter-proposals made and there will continue to be further proposals and counter-proposals made. One thing that is abundantly clear is that the demands of the electronic technicians are considerably in excess of what appears to be reasonable to grant.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, in order to clear the air I should like to ask a supplementary. I understand the Treasury Board has offered some 15.5 per cent and that the union is asking for some 23.7 per cent. Can the President of the Treasury Board advise, without revealing any particular figures, whether this is the situation as it now stands and whether in fact there is an impasse? As I understand it, the government is not prepared to offer any more money. Is this the situation?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. gentleman will recognize that for either party to publicly declare its final position is not the most effective way to proceed to negotiate an agreement.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize a supplementary by the right hon. member for Prince Albert and then one last supplementary on this subject by the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): In respect of the minister's answer in which he said that when we are negotiating we cannot let anyone know what stand we are taking. Did the minister, on behalf of the Treasury Board, not say that the stand of the government of Canada was inexorable and that there would be no increase over and above the amount originally recommended by the Conciliation Board for these people?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, I did not say that.

Mr. Diefenbaker: A representative of the Treasury Board?

Mr. Drury: No, nor did a representative of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Oh, yes, you did.

Mr. Drury: What the government has said is that it continues to be prepared to accept the unanimous report of the conciliation board, the judgment of the government being carried by its representative in that unanimous report.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, there was no denial at any time or explanation of the statement by the Treasury Board that this is what they would get and beyond that