

[English]

TRANSPORT

INTERCITY RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE—NATURE OF REPLY TO PROPOSAL BY RAILWAYS—REQUEST FOR TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport. In view of the fact that his predecessor requested the two major railroads in Canada to submit proposals to the government for an integrated intercity rail passenger service, and that the presidents of those railroads wrote to the former minister of transport on December 20 of last year submitting a proposal, I ask the minister if there was a reply to that letter? If so, when, and what was the nature of that reply?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I will check the correspondence.

Mr. Benjamin: I am sorry the minister said that he will look into this matter. I gave him notice of this question this morning.

An hon. Member: He's worse than Marchand.

Mr. Benjamin: In view of the fact that the two major railroads requested that this matter be resolved and agreed to by March 1 so that they could commence this new intercity rail service by this October, if it is the intention of the government to reply, will the minister table the letter which the railroads sent to the former minister last year, and does the government intend to agree to their proposals?

Mr. Lang: Of course, the issue is very important and requires due consideration. Whether I should or will table the correspondence is something I will determine after I have looked at it.

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POST OFFICE

POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT LEGISLATING END TO STRIKE IN VIEW OF EFFECT ON ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: I would like to direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister. I hope all my questions are greeted with such pleasure by the government of the day and I hope the pleasure of hon. members is demonstrated by their willingness to answer my questions.

Because of the concern of the people of Canada as to whether the government really intends to proceed with the intent of the anti-inflationary legislation in Bill C-73, has the cabinet considered back to work legislation for the postal workers if the strike persists?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this first question from the hon. member, and I am very glad to know that he is still associated with Crowfoot. After viewing the television

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interview last night, I wondered whether he was from Toronto.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh! .

Mr. Sharp: The program which the government has put forward in its attack on inflation may produce some strikes. We hope it will not. The government, of course, does not preclude the possibility that parliament may want to take action to send workers back to work. That is something only parliament can decide, and the government may or may not make such recommendations. I hope, however, that the postal workers will accept the same deal as was offered to the letter carriers, so that ordinary postal service can be resumed quickly.

Mr. Horner: I might say to the Acting Prime Minister that I would welcome his sons to contest the constituency of Crowfoot. I am sure they would well remember my presence there for a long time in the future.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Horner: I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the people of Canada can take the legislation of the government seriously if the government is not prepared to act on the very first strike which occurs after its announcement. If the government allows this strike to go on, is it not setting a precedent for all other union leaders and workers across Canada?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sharp: As the government has indicated, it is our hope that this program of restraint, which will apply and be enforced against certain elements in the community, will be supported on all sides. I would have thought that the kind of action being suggested by the hon. member, although I understand his motivation, would not contribute to the policy which is the result of a consensus with regard to restraint.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND—DATE OF SIGNING AND DURATION OF AGREEMENT ON SECOND PHASE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and ask him if it is his intention in the near future to sign an agreement with the province of Prince Edward Island regarding the second phase of the so-called comprehensive development plan. Would he also indicate for what period such an agreement will be in effect?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I can inform the hon. member that our department will ratify the second phase of the agreement on the development of