

Inquiries of the Ministry

An hon. Member: You will win an election on that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Tardif: Thank you very much. That is accepted with a great deal of humility.

Since the successful solution of the negotiations with the postal employees can the minister advise what is being done or contemplated in respect of other employees in group D?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of National Revenue and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Starr: The minister cannot answer the question from memory; he has to read it.

An hon. Member: Why does the hon. member for Russell ask the minister that question?

Mr. Starr: Which came first, the question or the answer?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, since the successful intervention of Judge Montpetit as mediator to settle the recent dispute with the postal workers, discussions with the Public Service Alliance and the proposed interim increase recommended by the Civil Service Commission for group D have continued.

These discussions were resumed on a bilateral basis at the request of Judge Montpetit who felt that further direct exchanges between representatives of the employer and the Public Service Alliance might prove useful.

These discussions have now reached a point where it would seem to be timely to request Judge Montpetit to enter the picture once again. I have therefore arranged for him to return to Ottawa to resume his functions as mediator in that portion of the dispute which involves the Public Service Alliance, which incidentally represents some 28,000 employees in group D. Judge Montpetit has arranged on very short notice to come to Ottawa tomorrow, and I am hopeful that he will be able to achieve without undue delay a successful result for this group of employees, as he did in the case of the postal workers.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would have thought Your Honour would have stopped this self-serving statement prepared in advance. It should have been made before the orders of the day. It is very wrong to use up time by this kind of self-serving procedure. I will not say that the question was planted: The question was seeded.

[Mr. Tardif.]

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I believe that the settlement in respect to the 28,000 employees in group D—

Mr. Starr: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

Mr. Benson: —who are in the same classification as the postal workers is an important concern to this house.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understood that the minister was rising on a point of order.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The minister was making a gratuitous statement that does not answer the question. The concern now being expressed for civil servants is belated, and this is an alibi.

Mr. Benson: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say that no government in history has had more concern for civil servants than the present government.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I doubt whether much could be served by pursuing the point of order, the question or the statement, which it has been suggested was more than a mere answer to a question. There may be some merit in the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, but the question appeared to be genuine, whether seeded or not. I am afraid that many questions asked from time to time are either seeded or planted, and it is very difficult for the Chair arbitrarily to rule whether or not they are in order. In any event the question was asked, it has been answered and we have had a point of order and a question of privilege. Perhaps we might now go on to something else.

REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL SUPER-
ANNUATION BENEFITS

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in view of the interest expressed in civil servants I would ask the Prime Minister whether the government has given consideration to the request of the Civil Service Association of Canada contained in a 12-page letter delivered to the government on November 7 asking for action to be taken on behalf of retired civil servants, the R.C.M.P. and armed forces personnel who retired prior to 1953. What action will be taken in this connection?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this matter is under active consideration.