

*Inquiries of the Ministry***NATIONAL DEFENCE****INQUIRY AS TO TABLING OF WHITE PAPER ON POLICY**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. G. J. McIlraith (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of National Defence whether he is now able to advise the house as to when he will table the white paper on defence.

Hon. G. R. Pearkes (Minister of National Defence): The answer that I gave on March 10 still applies today.

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Will the minister not do his best to see that this white paper is in the possession of hon. members before the Easter recess, so that it may be studied during the recess?

Mr. Pearkes: Since my estimates cannot be brought down before the Easter recess it is quite impossible to get the white paper out to members before the Easter recess.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT**ATTENDANCE OF MINISTER AT MEETING OF EMPLOYEES**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Azellus Denis (St. Denis): I should like to ask the Postmaster General a question. Is he aware of the meeting of post office employees held in Ottawa yesterday? Was he invited to that meeting and has he any comment to make on it?

Hon. W. M. Hamilton (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the meeting that was held yesterday. I was invited, but unfortunately it was impossible for me to attend. My comment today is exactly the same as I made to the hon. member for St. Denis on February 10 and again on February 24, when I pointed out to him that the matters under discussion were the concern of the civil service commission at this point.

Mr. Denis: May I direct a supplementary question to the Secretary of State. As the Postmaster General says this matter comes under the civil service commission, which comes under the control of the minister, may I ask him if he is aware of the meeting held in Ottawa yesterday by post office employees, and if he has any comment to make.

Hon. Henri Courtemanche (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of the meeting in Ottawa yesterday, and I have no comment to make.

Mr. Denis: May I ask the Prime Minister a question. Is he in a position at this time

to keep one promise, the promise he made to answer today the question I have just asked the Secretary of State and the Postmaster General? When there is some hardship so far as the post office employees are concerned, there must be somebody in the government who is responsible.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, no one can but pay tribute to the hon. gentleman for the affability he always displays when he asks his questions. I have been waiting for the opportunity to answer the question which I undertook to answer the other day. A similar question was asked by the hon. member on March 10 and on an earlier date, February 24, a question of like import was asked of the Postmaster General. At that time the Postmaster General replied:

—these are matters which come, in the first instance, under the responsibility of the civil service commission. It is not possible for an individual minister to establish wages for his employees or deal with the other factors which have been discussed at these meetings.

That was part of the answer he gave. I should like to draw the attention of the hon. member to the fact that I have at all times laid stress on the independent position of the civil service commission, and that that independent position must be scrupulously maintained and recognized. In a letter to one of the civil service organizations, the civil service association of Canada, in October, 1958 I pointed out that the civil service commission represents neither the employees nor the government as an employer. The responsibilities of the commission in regard to the matter of salaries are clearly set out in the Civil Service Act. It is realized that the decisions of the commission on salary matters have not always met with full agreement, but at all times the various organizations have expressed their utmost confidence in the commission.

Some representations were addressed to me by the federated association of letter carriers and the Canadian postal employees association and, relying on the premise I have already stated, I forwarded those letters to the civil service commission. The civil service commission has informed me that it will take into consideration the representations of these associations concerning salaries, compensation, overtime and the like.

I wish to say that in reviewing salaries of civil servants the pay research bureau of the civil service commission takes into consideration all classes of the service. For that reason I take it that any individual group of employees will not be dealt with separately by the commission.