

Inquiries of the Ministry

Speaker. In view of the credibility gap that obviously exists in the minds of those who heard the statement of the mediator on the one hand and that of the representative of the government on the other, will the President of the Treasury Board indicate the general position adopted by the government representatives? For example, did they advance as far in general terms as the position of Judge Lippé, the Chairman of the Conciliation Board?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. gentleman will be aware that the government and Judge Lippé were, with the exception of two issues, in agreement, and if there is to be an advance in this respect we would expect the advance to be made on the side of the postal unions, because the government has agreed with Judge Lippé on all except two issues.

Mr. Woolliams: What are they? Working conditions and salary?

Mr. Drury: The advance perhaps should properly come, if advance there is to be, on the side of the Council of Postal Unions. We quite naturally hope for this and are looking for further meetings with them to see if further progress can be made in this respect.

Mr. Stanfield: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of what the President of the Treasury Board has said, is it not clear that Dean Carrothers was correct in his statement that the government had not made any significant advance? I must say that, unless the President of the Treasury Board is able to indicate to the House what advances have been made, there is obviously a very serious credibility gap between the position taken by the representatives of the government and that of the mediator, which the President of the Treasury Board has done nothing to remove this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest that this is debate or argument and not a question. I believe that the hon. member for York South wishes to ask a supplementary question.

Mr. Lewis: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My question arises out of the answer the President of the Treasury Board has just given. Does that answer mean that the two items on which the government negotiators did not move from the position of Keith Campbell toward the position of the chairman are wages and job security? Also, does the minister's answer

signal to the postal employees' unions that it is not the intention of the government to move on these two points? If so, what kind of negotiations are now possible?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentleman recollects the terms of the Conciliation Board report he will see that the two issues that separated the government's nominee, Mr. Campbell, and Judge Lippé were longevity pay and hourly rates, and these were the two issues on which no progress was made. I would not wish the House to interpret my remarks as a signal to the unions that the government is not prepared to make any move at all and that consequently further negotiations are completely fruitless. That is not the case.

Mr. Lewis: That is the way the minister sounded.

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, I regret that the comprehension of the hon. gentleman is so limited in this respect—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Drury: —but I wanted to correct any misapprehensions he may have had.

Mr. Lewis: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is not related to the minister's remark about my comprehension or lack of it. That is irrelevant to this point. I rise on a point of order which I submit is an important one. Time and again the minister has said that he cannot negotiate publicly, that questions are improper, out of place, premature and so on; yet every time he wants to make clear that the government is going to stand pat by its wage offer and make negotiations impossible and fruitless, he finds a way of doing so.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have some serious doubts whether that is a point of order. I am sure the hon. member will find it difficult to indicate what Standing Order I ought to refer to. I bring to the attention of hon. members that we are running short of time. I see a great many hon. members who want to ask questions. Many are called but few will be chosen, I am afraid. I have seen at least 75 hon. members standing. Again I say that many will be disappointed. I will recognize the hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond on a supplementary—

[*Translation*]

—and I will then give the floor to the hon. member for Shefford.