

*Inquiries of the Ministry***CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS****ALLEGED DOWNGRADING OF PASSENGER SERVICE—
REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION BY TRANSPORT
COMMISSION**

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport, but in his absence I will direct it to the acting minister. Incidentally, the minister was supposed to be here today. In view of the accusation made by the London, Ontario, and District Railway Workers Council that Canadian National Railways has embarked on a deliberate plan to discourage people from using passenger trains by providing terrible service, will the minister request the Canadian Transport Commission to investigate this charge immediately?

Hon. James Richardson (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport is away from the House on government business. I will see that the hon. member's question is brought to his attention.

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POST OFFICE**CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNIONS—ACTION TO
EASE TENSION IN LIGHT OF REJECTION OF REGIONAL
PAY SCALES AND POSSIBLE STRIKE VOTE**

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. Now that the Toronto local of the Letter Carriers Union has publicly rejected the government's offer in the long drawn-out negotiations for a new contract, particularly the proposal for regional pay scales, and has also recommended the holding of a national strike vote, may I ask what action the government has taken to ease the growing tension?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): The easy answer is that we are continuing to negotiate. I think the hon. member will understand that the publicly-announced action of one of the locals of the Council of Postal Unions does not necessarily govern the entire council.

Mr. Dinsdale: Has the government now decided to draw upon the expertise available in the Department of Labour and appoint a special skilled negotiator?

Mr. Drury: The answer, Mr. Speaker, is no.

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PUBLIC SERVICE**GOVERNMENT REGIONAL RATES OF PAY POLICY—
CONSIDERATION BY PARLIAMENT**

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): I should like to ask the President of the Treasury Board whether it is now government policy to shift wage payments from national to regional rates, not just in the Post Office but in the operational categories of employees and possibly later in the administrative categories?

[Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton).]

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): This is the direction in which the federal government in any event has been moving for some years. The proposal made to the postal workers is one small further step along this particular road.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the President of the Treasury Board a supplementary question. In view of the serious implications of this shift in policy, will the government consider bringing the matter before Parliament to ascertain whether Parliament approves of the shift from a national to a regional rate structure?

Mr. Drury: Probably the most effective mechanism for examining this subject in Parliament would be to use one of the supply or opposition days for the purpose. I repeat that this is not a shift in policy; it is merely the continuation of a policy which has been in operation for some years.

**GOVERNMENT REGIONAL RATES OF PAY POLICY—
POSSIBLE IMPEDIMENT TO SETTLEMENT OF
NEGOTIATIONS**

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): I should like to ask the President of the Treasury Board whether this move to establish pay rates on a national as opposed to a regional basis, particularly in the Post Office and the operational groups in the public service, is the major impediment to the settlement of negotiations?

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): I am not sure which negotiations the hon. member has in mind. In any case it is difficult to indicate unilaterally what is the major stumbling block in the way of agreement, if indeed there be any.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Fraser Valley West for a last supplementary on this subject. I owe it to hon. members to bring to their attention that there are quite a few members who are seeking to be recognized before the end of the question period. Obviously a number of them will be disappointed, so we should try to limit supplementaries.

Mr. Rose: I recognize the difficulty caused by the general nature of my question. I should therefore like to refer specifically to the operational groups in the public service, for instance, stationary engineers and firemen. Is the issue of regional versus national pay rates the major impediment to agreement at the moment?

Mr. Drury: In some instances, although this is rather difficult to measure from time to time, the question of regional rates of pay appears to be of major concern. In others it is the general level of pay and related regional rates.