

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Keeper:** Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear that the minister will be pleased to look into this specific case. With regard to affirmative action, let me ask a supplementary question. Considering that this charge against CNR follows on the heels of another sex discrimination case in a Crown corporation, that being the firing of two women from skilled jobs by Canadair, in Quebec, will the minister tell the House whether Crown corporations fall under the affirmative action program he referred to on Monday and, if so, when compliance with equality standards will be enforced?

**Mr. Axworthy:** Madam Speaker, I would like to make this plain to the hon. member. He may forget that it was the previous Liberal government that established the Canadian Human Rights Commission and put the legislation into effect which now gives these people the opportunity to take their grievances forward to the commission.

**Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton):** It was this Parliament, unanimously.

**Mr. Axworthy:** And that is the reason it is there.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Axworthy:** That is why we had a human rights bill, and why we have a commission which allows these particular cases to be heard on a case by case basis.

On the more general question of affirmative action, we have stated in the throne speech and I have stated in this House that we are presently preparing an assessment of the affirmative action program. This will be brought before cabinet in a matter of two or three weeks to be examined, and we will be making an announcement as to how it will apply generally throughout the public service and the area of Crown corporations.

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**POST OFFICE****INQUIRY WHETHER SETTLEMENT REACHED WITH CUPW IN NATIONAL INTEREST**

**Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Postmaster General. I will try to put it with at least as much humility as that displayed by my colleague, the hon. member for Northumberland.

Can the minister assure this House and the Canadian public that the settlement reached with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers is in the national interest and is not the 26 per cent give-away as reportedly alleged by the hon. member for York-Peel?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce to the House that yesterday afternoon the

Treasury Board ratified the agreement between the Post Office and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. Madam Speaker, this wage agreement represents an increase of 8.1 per cent for the entire contract period. As for the other benefits awarded under this contract, including the wage agreement, they represent an increase of 10.4 per cent for the entire contract period.

Madam Speaker, it should be noted that this agreement is in the best interests of all Canadians. It is quite a reasonable agreement and one which we are very happy to have reached with CUPW; it augurs well for labour relations within the Post Office.

[*English*]

SETTLEMENT WITH CUPW—EFFECT ON MAIL RATES—COST TO DEPARTMENT

**Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris):** Madam Speaker, my question is almost supplementary to the one asked by the previous questioner.

Now that the contract with CUPW has been ratified by both the union and Treasury Board, will the Postmaster General inform the House how much it will add to the Post Office budget for the fiscal year and the deficit—which has been running at a half billion dollars for the past five years—and could the hon. gentleman indicate whether his plan to increase first-class mail rates possibly up to 25 cents a letter flows directly out of this rich settlement?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General):** Madam Speaker, I think that the hon. member has somewhat lost touch with the Post Office Department in the last few years, because the deficits have varied from one year to the next and have not been consistent, as he would have us believe.

Furthermore, we must surely revise certain postal rates periodically. This is done every two years or so, and I expect we will follow this tradition and soon submit new proposals to the House of Commons which, Madam Speaker, will not come into effect immediately since we agreed several years ago with postal users to give them the required time to adjust to proposed increases.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dinsdale:** Madam Speaker, I think you will agree that that is a rather oblique response. Perhaps I can approach the question from a different direction.

In view of the impossible financial straitjacket in which Canada Post has placed itself, as evidenced by the renewed freeze on letter carrier service, for example, which is the most visible service of the Post Office, is this the beginning of the phase-out of traditional postal service in the face of growing competition from private couriers and the new technology of electronic mail?