

Oral Questions

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the President of the Treasury Board whether he has contingency plans for immediate application in hand to appoint a mediator in this dispute pending eventual settlement through arbitration? I have good reason to believe that an undertaking of this sort would have the firefighters back on the job—

● (1440)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. While the hon. member's question is being pondered the Chair will recognize—

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks whether we have a contingency plan to meet what as yet is a hypothetical situation. The answer is yes, and I think that the contingency plan will meet the requirements of those who have been making special representations.

Mr. Baldwin: It is like the budget; it is all hypothetical.

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POST OFFICE**POSTAL WORKERS' STRIKE—PROGRESS IN MEDIATION OF DISPUTE**

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Postmaster General if he can inform the House whether discussions under the leadership of the special mediator, Mr. Eric Taylor, are continuing and whether any real progress is being made in those discussions?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that management and union representatives held discussions till one o'clock a.m. without arriving at a concrete result. They met again this morning with Mr. Taylor and the discussions are still going on this afternoon.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I note there are a number of supplementary questions. The Chair will first recognize the hon. member for York South, then the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi, followed by the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I realize that the Postmaster General would not want to deal with the details of the discussions and negotiations at this stage, but I wonder whether he could inform us with regard to the second part of my question? Is progress being made in those discussions or are they still in great difficulty and at an impasse?

Mr. Ouellet: According to the word of Mr. Taylor, Mr. Speaker, there is progress being made. They are working very hard to come to some concrete proposal for decision.

POSTAL WORKERS' STRIKE—MEASURES TO ASSURE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SECURITY CHEQUES

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Postmaster General what emer-

[Mr. Speaker.]

gency measures were being taken to deliver social security cheques of all kinds across the country. Today I found out that in my riding and across the country pensioners and welfare people are queuing up not knowing where to find their cheques. Again I ask, what precise emergency measures are being taken by the government to make sure that welfare cheques, UIC cheques and pension cheques of all kinds are being delivered to Canadians?

An hon. Member: And milk cheques.

Mr. Grafftey: Will he tell the House exactly what is being done?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that in any case the pensioners' cheques are not to be delivered before Monday next. I can assure the hon. member that we have set up a plan to see that the pensioners will not be deprived of their cheques. I offered yesterday to show confidentially to the hon. member a document describing steps to be taken to assure the delivery of cheques. The member left the House soon after asking his question yesterday and I could not find him.

[English]

Mr. Grafftey: Oh, Mr. Speaker, this is a disgrace.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will, of course, recognize the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi, but I would ask hon. members to give the House a chance to proceed with the question period. It seems to me we are spending more time on hooting and cheering than on questions and answers. The hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi.

Mr. Grafftey: Will the Postmaster General inform the hundreds of people in my riding who are waiting for these cheques and cannot draw welfare, and who this weekend will perhaps not be able to pay for their groceries, what these confidential measures are—they should not be confidential—and indicate where they can get their cheques?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Ouellet: The hon. member should well know that social welfare cheques are sent out by provincial governments. It has been announced again and again that the provinces will take steps to deliver these cheques to social welfare recipients. As to the old age security payments which we are responsible for, I ask the hon. member to try and understand that security demands that steps taken to deliver these cheques not be made public. The sum at stake ranges in millions of dollars, but if the hon. member is ready to offer some guarantee for it, I am willing to revise my position.

[English]

An hon. Member: Get your dog team out.

Mr. Woolliams: Tell the truth.

An hon. Member: Nonsense!