

Oral Questions

flages what action is necessary with the establishment of another royal commission?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, we would want to take the hon. member's suggestion fully into consideration. We will be looking at Dr. Bandeen's suggestion, discussing it with Newfoundland and looking at the extent to which studies have been undertaken. I think Dr. Bandeen had those in mind but wondered if we could not now consider them all together, that is to say, have a commission give a short, sharp look at the question, which would also allow the people of Newfoundland to have some input into some of the difficult questions involved.

Mr. Horner: That's right; bury it in another royal commission.

Mr. Lang: I might say to the hon. member that if it were not possible to have a commission bring these matters into focus quickly and sharply, then I would hope we could find another solution.

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TRANSPORTREQUEST OF ATLANTIC PROVINCES FOR FUNDS TO IMPROVE
TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the minister would reply to the submission of the four provinces in the Atlantic region with regard to the upgrading of the Trans-Canada highway. Can he say when a decision will be made for advancing the funds to build up that highway which is necessary to the over-all transportation needs of the region?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, no decision has been taken in that regard, although we have been working with the Atlantic provinces on the question of the priority of the various roads they listed with us. Of course, in Newfoundland and other areas in Atlantic Canada, the question of highway upgrading is tied closely to the future nature of rail services to be offered and also the kind of marine service which will be available.

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POST OFFICESUGGESTION TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES BE HALTED PENDING
SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTE—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON
NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Postmaster General. Since the mediator between the Post Office and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers has given up his efforts, calling the dispute the toughest and most complicated he has encountered in industrial relations, and since the government is forcing another confrontation in the Post Office at the worst time of year by its refusal to honour

[Mr. Marshall.]

its contractual obligations, will the minister tell the House if he is prepared to halt further technological changes in the Post Office until present problems have been settled to the satisfaction of both parties to the contract?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, first, the mediation has not been completed. There have been consultations between the parties since Dr. Hall indicated he was no longer ready to proceed. That is the first point. The second point is that we are doing all in our power in order to avoid that sort of confrontation of which the hon. member spoke. We are attempting to proceed, having recognized that the mediation of Dr. Hall has been advantageous. It has delineated some of the issues. There has been some action on the part of the Post Office in the way requested by the union. Undoubtedly, we look forward to continuing that particular process.

I hope the hon. member joins me in hoping that no threats now or in future will lead to stoppage of postal service. I understand that such threats have been made. We are not making any such threats. I hope everyone within Canada will continue to use the postal service, and will be assured that that postal service will continue past the Christmas period.

Mr. Rodriguez: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since there is some dispute about what the minister said about negotiations going on and since the minister and officials of the Post Office are, in the public's view, making statements, will the minister promise that he will report to this House immediately with respect to the negotiations and what is happening in the Post Office regarding Article 29, so that this House and the nation can be informed about relationships within the Post Office?

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, we dealt with this matter without the glare of publicity. In my view it is more advantageous to have these particular matters dealt with behind closed doors, to avoid disquietude on the part of the Canadian population. It is our view that we have made progress in the past. We will continue to make progress and, hopefully, there is not going to be an interruption in postal service either now or in the future.

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GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIONINQUIRY IF GUIDELINES FOR AGENTS OF CROWN CORPORATION
CONDONE ISSUANCE OF INFLATED INVOICES

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Prime Minister relating to the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition. The Prime Minister indicated in his answer that guidelines with respect to the practice of Crown corporations now exist. I wonder if he can advise the House whether those guidelines condone the practice which has been admitted by the head of the government, the practice of issuing inflated invoices by Crown corporations and the authorization of transactions under which payments are made into secret bank accounts.

Mr. Paproski: It's like skimming off the top.