

the House yesterday and who sought to ask questions but were not recognized.

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[Translation]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

QUEBEC—INTERPRETATION OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CONCESSION RESPECTING CERTAIN COST-SHARING PROGRAMS

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a question of the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

We are told that at the federal-provincial first ministers' conference, the federal government has agreed to increase special abatement points for Quebec from 22 to 24 in connection with hospitalization and health insurance programs. Can this concession be taken as a sign of recognition by the federal government of a special status for Quebec, at least in the fields which I have just mentioned, as was indicated yesterday by the Quebec premier at a news conference?

[English]

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): No, Mr. Speaker. There were previous arrangements with Quebec relative to hospital insurance dating back to 1964. These are not changed. The province does not operate under the system of tax points with reference to medicare, as the hon. member knows. The health proposals which were discussed with the provinces had to do with a new formula based on a per capita assessment and did not involve the equalization formula per se.

Mr. Speaker: I would allow the hon. member a supplementary question but the question period has to end at 3.19 p.m. There are four minutes left.

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LABOUR RELATIONS

POSSIBLE STRIKE BY BELL CANADA EMPLOYEES—REQUEST FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Labour or to the Minister of Transport, whichever of the two feels best suited to answer it, regarding the anticipated strike by Bell Canada operators. As I understand the situation, a 90 per cent vote has now authorized a strike. I am wondering whether the minister is aware of this and whether he is prepared to intervene? Is he in a position to offer some compromise formula on the basis of which the two parties can return to the bargaining table?

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): I am well aware of it, Mr. Speaker. I am also aware of the fact that if the employees decide to go on strike they have a legal right to do so. I believe both parties know that my department is quite prepared, as it did two years ago, to provide mediation services provided, of course, both sides ask for those services. If not, we shall have to see how long we

Inquiries of the Ministry

can make do with a strike affecting the Bell telephone system.

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RESEARCH

FARM MACHINERY—ASSISTANCE TO PRAIRIE PROVINCES IN ESTABLISHING TESTING CENTRE

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker I have a question for the Minister of State for Science and Technology. In view of the statement in Professor Barber's report that Canadian farm machinery companies were not getting their fair share of the market because they could not afford to pay for the necessary technological research and development, is the minister prepared to recommend that funds be provided to assist the three prairie governments which are now setting up a research and development centre for testing farm machinery?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of State for Science and Technology): I am not familiar with the suggestion made by the hon. member but I will be pleased to take it under consideration.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS—ALLEGED PROHIBITION AGAINST RELEASE BY GOVERNMENT REGIONAL ECONOMISTS

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister. Can the hon. gentleman inform the House why government regional economists have now been instructed not to release unemployment statistics concerning lay-offs across the country but, rather, that inquiries must be channelled through the offices of the ministers?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): I shall make inquiries, Mr. Speaker.

UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS—INVESTIGATION INTO PUBLICATION BEFORE OFFICIAL RELEASE

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): While we are talking about security regulations, is the Acting Prime Minister in a position to reveal the results of the investigation he made known yesterday into the publication of unemployment statistics for the last two months one day in advance of the official publication?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): The inquiries are still continuing, Mr. Speaker.

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POST OFFICE

WINDSOR—PELEE ISLAND—DELAY OF MAIL CAUSED BY AIR TRANSPORT WEIGHT LIMITATIONS

Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent-Essex): Since my inquiry concerns two departments and since the Postmaster General