

*Oral Questions*

has not made, at least up to the weekend, a single new proposal in its negotiations with CUPW?

**Hon. J.-Gilles Lamontagne (Postmaster General):** Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to say that we have not made any propositions to CUPW up to now, but our situation and our stand was very clearly made at the opening of the discussions with the conciliation board in the form of a 30-page document which was also made public. Our position was made very clear on that occasion. Since then, conciliation has been going on, and as far as I am concerned it is progressing satisfactorily, considering that we are still discussing matters on which we have taken a firm stand. These are items of which I am sure hon. members would approve and would want us to stand behind. On other items, we are open for discussion while in the conciliation process.

For the hon. member's information, we are also carrying on discussions at the same time with the LCUC. These negotiations are progressing well and on time and there is a very good understanding between the union and the Post Office. As far as CUPW is concerned, I cannot say more: we are still in conciliation, which is going well, and I hope we will reach an agreement sooner or later.

**Mr. Broadbent:** Mr. Speaker, I will give the minister the benefit of the doubt if my first question was not perfectly clear to him. I will now repeat it in the hope of clarifying it. The position, as I understand it, of CUPW is that the proposition which the Post Office is now putting before them does not improve by one iota the working conditions which they have in terms of the existing contract which expired a year ago. In fact, among the new proposals in the government's package are those which, in the view of the union, take away certain benefits that they have.

Will the minister confirm that that is the case in terms of the proposals they are putting forward, that there are no new improvements at all for CUPW and, if so, does he think this is a responsible attitude for management to take, and is it likely to head off an anticipated postal strike?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Lamontagne:** Mr. Speaker, I think that in these conditions the Post Office Department must be responsible enough in such negotiations to take the interests of Canadians as regards the working conditions of its employees. I must say that the working conditions of postal employees can be favourably compared with those of most Canadian workers. I think that we are not ashamed to suggest how the new negotiations should be undertaken. There are four principles, for example, on which we are not prepared to negotiate and I think that Canadians would not accept it, if we did so; among others—

[*English*]

We intend to proceed with technological change. We want to have freedom to contract out some of our work. We want our casual and temporary employees to meet peak demands, and we want to be able to measure quantity and quality of employee output, which we do not have at the moment. The

[Mr. Broadbent.]

workers previously acquired certain rights and, with those rights, certain responsibilities: we would like to negotiate in that area.

**Mr. Broadbent:** Mr. Speaker, the minister, in his answer, has confirmed the accusation that was made on the weekend by CUPW. He has, indeed, provided a list of new areas that the Post Office would like to get agreement on; but the minister should know that any trade union representing any body of workers and taking on the points that he has raised would not concede to themselves that these are concessions. What they are saying is that in terms of improvement, as the minister indicated in dealing with that part of my question, there has been no improvement over the existing circumstances; there is no new offer from the government at all: no new offer was made by the Post Office, which seems to confirm the fact that in the last dozen years there have been 18 studies showing the management of the Post Office is at fault. So if he wants to hold off a postal strike in July, surely the government must come up with positive proposals in addition to coming up with some changes that the workers will see are to their advantage.

● (1427)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Lamontagne:** Mr. Speaker, since we are now in the process of conciliation, I think it does not rest with me to disclose the terms of the conciliation to the House of Commons. I would like to let the conciliation board perform its work and we will see later on.

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## SMALL BUSINESS

### ADMINISTRATION OF TRAINEE PROGRAM

**Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Employment and Immigration even though it relates to the policy announced by the Minister of State (Small Business) concerning a program of assistance to trainees in small businesses. This program will cost \$5,400,000. I would like to know if the choice of trainees eligible for that assistance will be made by the Department of Employment.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** What we will probably do, Mr. Speaker, is work in close co-operation with the Minister of State (Small Business); but at the same time, because training and education is in provincial jurisdiction, we will probably have to work under our Adult Occupational Training Act or one of the ongoing programs that we have with the various provinces.