

Oral Questions

Mr. Fraser: Was that just an idle threat, or does the government intend to hold a government supervised vote under the authority of the Public Service Staff Relations Act, or otherwise by special legislation, and can the Prime Minister tell the House whether the Postmaster General will stand by his commitment to resign if the union members support the union executive and not him?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the second part of the question was dealt with in previous circumstances. With regard to the first part, I heard hon. members on the other side saying that the hon. member is badly interpreting what the Postmaster General said. I, personally, did not hear him.

STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—REQUEST FOR ESTIMATE OF DAMAGE TO SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): A further supplementary question for the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the hon. member for York East, speaking for the government a few days ago, said:

You can talk about small business over there as much as you like but they are learning to adjust.

And in view of the fact that the Postmaster's repudiation of this position in a speech yesterday when he said "small businesses go broke during postal strikes", can the right hon. Prime Minister advise the House whether the Postmaster General's statement was based on information being received by the government and if so, is the Prime Minister prepared to tell this House just how damaging the strike is for small businesses and other people and organizations in Canada?

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): How is the campaign?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I will gladly take note of the question, Mr. Speaker.

STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—GOVERNMENT VIEW OF IMPORTANCE OF EFFECT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Yesterday in a speech the Postmaster General referred to the loss of farm income and export sales caused by strikes at grain elevators, docks and railways. In view of the fact that strikes in these areas have led to prompt legislative intervention, is it the view of the Prime Minister that bankruptcy and layoffs in small businesses is of no comparable importance?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker.

STRIKE OF INSIDE WORKERS—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON BACK TO WORK LEGISLATION IN VIEW OF EFFECT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): A supplementary question. Have any efforts been made by the government to assess the hardship and outright damage created by the five week postal shutdown and if so, how would such information affect the Prime Minister's statement that

parliament would intervene at a time when the public disservice outweighed the right to strike itself?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as I answered to the previous question, I do not have any precise information on that. Some may have accumulated in the Postmaster General's office or other offices.

Mr. Fraser: We are getting it on our side.

Mr. Trudeau: If the hon. member has the information he should not have asked the question.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Maybe it is good to get you on the record.

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LABOUR CONDITIONS

REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF STATEMENT BY POSTMASTER GENERAL ON POSITION OF UNION MEMBER IN LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister and arises from the speech the Postmaster General made yesterday at a Rotary Club which included some highly disturbing comments, if accurate. I should like to ask the Prime Minister the following. The Postmaster General is reported as having said:

—the union member today is fighting the ordinary citizen, he's fighting the nation—It's no longer a labour-management conflict where management loses when labour wins, it's a labour-nation conflict—

I should like to ask the Prime Minister if the Postmaster General was stating official government policy?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the question is obviously a rhetorical one. This is not government policy. This is obviously an opinion but the opinion of a minister who is highly respected by Canadians in general, by many labour representatives in particular. I think the Canadian public, and probably most members of the House, would welcome the minister expressing his concern in this way. It is certain that the labour movement has cause to consider its future in this country in the way things are evolving. I think it is a very important question that all members should be asking themselves.

INQUIRY AS TO POSSIBLE CHANGES IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SYSTEM

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): A supplementary question. It was suggested by the Postmaster General that to be opposed to the government as a member of a trade union movement now was to be unpatriotic which goes a little far for a man who believes in civil liberties. I should like to know if it is government policy as expressed by the Postmaster General when he said that the free collective bargaining system in Canada was conceived in a simpler kind of society and requires basic change. I should like to ask the Prime Minister if that is the government's policy and, if so, what kind of basic changes in the