

Inquiries of the Ministry

General. Since the advent of the rotating postal strikes, has the government been delivering old age pension cheques, government annuity cheques and similar payments to areas such as Carleton Place and Smiths Falls? Can the minister say whether this personal service will be or has been extended to all areas of Canada? Also, will he inform the House whether the messengers are private bonded couriers or departmental employees?

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General): With respect to the particular places mentioned by the hon. member, I will have to consult with my officials. As the hon. member knows, my colleagues in the Department of National Health and Welfare took care some time ago to mail early many of their cheques. I will have to seek further information on the particular places mentioned.

Mr. McCutcheon: A supplementary question. My question is basic and simple. Is the department sending people to places such as these to personally deliver mail?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has restated the question asked in the first instance. My understanding is that the minister will look into the matter.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

SAFETY OF CANADIANS IN AMMAN, JORDAN

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): My question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It is about Canadian citizens and nationals of other countries now being held as hostages by Palestinian insurgents in Amman, Jordan. Can the minister bring us up to date on the current situation and tell us whether it is expected that Jordan will be in a position to guarantee the safety of our fellow citizens?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): The reports I read just before coming into the House are very serious. There is great trouble in Amman, and it continues. There were reports that some Canadian citizens are being held as hostages but we have been unable to confirm this; the reports are somewhat contradictory. Our embassy in Beirut, which also looks after our interests in Jordan, is checking on these reports and I may have further information on the subject later. As to the safety of Canadians in Jordan, measures to assist them as the situation might warrant have been arranged through the United States and British embassies in particular.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): May I ask the minister whether he can tell us the approximate number of Canadians in Jordan, and whether any have so far sought asylum or refuge in either the American or the British embassies?

Mr. Sharp: The records we have show there are seven Canadian residents in Jordan but of course there may be some Canadian tourists there who would not necessarily be registered. The reports I have received are that Canadians are not among those who are being held hostage. I would think that any Canadians who might want to get out would act in concert with the United States and British citizens who are there, and they would be informed as to how best to look after themselves. We have no information so far that any Canadians are being held.

DRUGS

INQUIRY AS TO PUBLICATION OF LE DAIN COMMISSION REPORT

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): I should like to address a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare about the 700-page Le Dain Commission report. Does the minister plan to make it public tomorrow and does he intend to hold a briefing session for members of the press, members of the opposition and maybe members of his own party?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): It is premature to consider seriously the mechanics which might be employed to make this report public since the matter is still before the cabinet and no decision has been taken on whether or not it should be made public.

An hon. Member: Shame!

Mr. Woolliams: Has the minister or any member of his department discussed the possibility or the probability of this document being tabled tomorrow so that people outside the department can see this document which he seems to regard as a security document?

Mr. Munro: No, Mr. Speaker. As I say, no decision has been made by the cabinet on whether or not it will be tabled, and I doubt very much whether a decision will be reached by tomorrow.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): May I ask the minister whether he has been able to overcome the objections of the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General to the publication of this report?