

of Energy, Mines and Resources here today which fuels that movement. I hope they will stop it.

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### EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

#### HIGH COMMISSIONER TO LONDON—INQUIRY WHETHER APPOINTMENT FOR FIVE-YEAR TERM

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Island):** Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Prime Minister, who I know is well aware that the appointments of Canadian High Commissioner to London and Ambassador to France are traditionally for periods of five years. I know he is also aware that this practice of fulfilling the five-year period was respected by the previous government in the cases of the Hon. Gérard Pelletier and the Hon. Paul Martin.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister if he would confirm, contrary to continuing press speculation, that the present incumbent of the position of Canadian High Commissioner to London, the Hon. Jean Wadds, will be accorded this same treatment and the practice will extend to her in her appointment, which I am sure the Prime Minister knows is being carried out with extreme competence and high devotion to duty.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Madam Speaker, I would certainly agree that the High Commissioner to London is a very distinguished High Commissioner and I have high regard for her. As for the practice referred to by the hon. lady, I have no knowledge of any such practice or of any set time for any appointments to ambassadorial posts anywhere.

**Miss MacDonald:** I would like to ask the Prime Minister then, looking at the history of appointments as Ambassador to France and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, which if he will go back over those have been for five-year periods, whether that also holds with regard to the present incumbent in London.

**Mr. Trudeau:** Madam Speaker, I can remember some High Commissioners to London who stayed a period considerably shorter than the five years, but it seems to me that is irrelevant. What the hon. lady is saying is that in the last 12 years, during which our government named ambassadors to Paris and high commissioners to London, they were so good we decided to keep them five years, which may be the case in the present situation. But there is no such rule.

### Oral Questions

● (1150)

### PUBLIC SERVICE

#### TRANSLATORS' DISPUTE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill):** Madam Speaker, my question concerns the worsening relations between the government and its employees and is addressed to the President of the Treasury Board.

In light of the fact that CUPTE, the translators union, the very people who are translating my words into the other official language at this time, have been forced into a strike position for next Monday, although they have already agreed with the report of the conciliation board, I wonder why it is the policy, and if not the policy certainly the practice of this government, to force its employees into strike action. This contract with the translators expired 18 months ago and the contract with the clerks expired over a year ago. Why is it the policy of the government to stall and delay and force our employees to suffer because it will not move in negotiations?

**Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board):** Madam Speaker, the policy of the government is to strike a fair and equitable settlement with its employees. No one is forcing the union in question to go on strike. I was very disappointed to learn yesterday that they did not show up for the mediation procedures. There had been substantial progress made. I hope they will return to mediation and that this problem will be eliminated.

**Mr. Murphy:** Madam Speaker, the problem has been not that they will not show up for meetings but that the government will not move in those meetings. My question relates to that very fact. The Minister of Employment and Immigration went to Copenhagen last July where he signed an agreement providing that we would remove discrimination against women. Yet the Public Service Commission has said that one of the basic reasons for women not moving up in the public service is the fact that they have family responsibilities. The government's nominee on the conciliation board expressed his strongest dissent for the principle of paid maternity leave, one of the very things that is keeping women out of the public service. Why should they meet with the mediators when the government refuse to give them something that is fair and just?

**Mr. Johnston:** Madam Speaker, I think it would be helpful if the hon. member would follow the mediation proceedings and negotiations a little more carefully. We extended a very generous family leave package to the clerks and we have made the same offer to the translators. I am surprised that the hon. member would consider a provision where for 17 weeks employees receive 60 per cent of insured earnings, which is roughly \$174 per week, is not generous. I think it is an important precedent and one that we should all be proud of. That has been offered to the translators and, as far as I know, it has been rejected. Their demands are much higher than that.