

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Translation]

Mr. André Fortin (Lothbinière): Mr. Speaker, the statement just made by the Postmaster General and Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans), when he tabled letters is, in our view, the most remarkable he has since he became minister.

While I was listening to him the other day on a CBC program, the minister merely replied to the sensible questions put to him by the interviewer: those are illegal strikes. Four strikes have started among postal employees in Montreal, and all are illegal. Mr. Speaker, there is one aspect I would like to stress. When a minister or any other employer is himself involved in a conflict, his duty is not to assess the legality of the conflict but to see to it that it is solved and that the Canadian people are given flawless service.

Postal services are essential, but the Postmaster General and Minister of Communications, through his legal or illegal support of patronage, has created a situation where the people of Canada's metropolis are now severely inconvenienced.

What is more, I read in today's *Le Devoir* and I quote:

A Montreal radio station has announced that Mr. Kierans had threatened to make Toronto the main transfer point for mail, but *Le Devoir* has been unable to confirm this news.

Of course, neither the newspaper nor any member of the opposition succeeded in having the news confirmed because right from the start, the minister was firmly glued to his seat and let the conflict get worse.

Mr. Speaker, we hope a jury set up for this purpose will solve the conflict and will force the minister to take his responsibilities in order to ensure a perfect service and to eliminate political patronage in this sector.

Postal services are expensive enough, since the implementation of the minister's new policy, to warrant the population an impeccable service.

[English]

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**GRAIN****NON-PRODUCTION OF WHEAT—ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister without

[Mr. Orlikow.]

Portfolio in charge of the Wheat Board. Would the minister, who evidently has now advised many western wheat farmers not to plant wheat on their land this year, say whether this announcement or statement of government policy is to be followed by any government measure which will make it practical for the farmers in question to survive through the year without farming their lands?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, the whole question of the cash and income position of the farmers on the prairies is under review. The point, of course, which the Leader of the Opposition seems to have missed is that the farmers to whom I was particularly speaking have sufficient grain on hand already to meet the quota they are likely to have for this year and next year. So their gross income is fixed by the fact that they have this grain on hand. By the non-production of their land they will have less costs for the period and therefore this will improve their net income position.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I assure the minister I did not miss the point but perhaps I did not quite grasp the point of how a farmer can farm without farming. I would ask the minister to explain to the House and the country, having given this advice to the farmers—and I suggest the minister has an obligation to do this immediately—what measures he has to advance on behalf of the government to enable the farmers to accept his advice and survive with any acceptable standard of living?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, it is my hope at an early date that we will be able to make further statements concerning government policy in respect of the use of agricultural land in this area. I said I hoped this can come at an early date because we are conscious of the fact that it is important for the farmer, who has his seeding plans to think about, to have such information as soon as possible.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, this supplementary question is based on a hope on my part that I may receive an answer. Is the minister in a position to say whether the government is prepared to adopt any program of providing some payments for farm storage in respect of wheat stored on the farms of farmers who the minister expects to live off the wheat they grew last year and the year before?