

Order Paper Questions

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

[English]

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. J.-J. Blais (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: 62, 3,081, 3,203, 3,208, 3,306 and 3,341.

[Text]

POST OFFICE—LYNDHURST ONTARIO

Question No. 62—**Mr. Cossitt:**

1. With reference to the answer to Question No. 48 of the Second Session of the 29th Parliament to the effect that the annual rent paid by the government is \$5,500 for a post office in Lyndhurst, Ontario, owned by Mrs. Deborah Lawlor, daughter of Area Postmaster, J. S. Hackett, and leased by the government as of May 1, 1973, is the Post Office Department or the Department of Public Works aware that the rental previously paid for a post office in Lyndhurst was \$120 per year from 1960 to 1966 and \$300 per year from 1966 to May 1, 1973 and, if so, what are the specific justifications for the large difference in rents between the former and present locations, which are both situated on the same street other than the somewhat increased amount in space?

2. Is the Department of Public Works aware that the present rental figure of \$5,500 far exceeds the usual rentals in the area in question and, if so, what was the reason this excess was permitted?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): I am informed by the Post Office Department and the Department of Public Works as follows: 1. A group postmaster is responsible to provide adequate accommodation for the Post Office he operates and included in his remuneration is a certain amount to help him provide for such accommodation. These amounts are established by collective agreement with the Canadian Postmasters' Association. The Post Office Department does not get involved in the rental arrangements that may be made between a group postmaster and another party other than making certain the premises are satisfactory and centrally located within the village boundaries. In most instances the postmaster owns the premises where the Post Office is located. However, the conditions change substantially when a post office is elevated to Grade status. The Department of Public Works then becomes responsible to provide the required postal accommodation and this is usually provided in a Crown-owned or leased building, in accordance with post office specifications. Our file shows the postmaster at Lyndhurst, who has been in office since January 15, 1966, was renting space (136 square feet of work space plus 55 feet of public lobby) in a building owned by a Mr. Wing. The rental excluded heat and light which the postmaster had to provide. It is possible that his Predecessor, Mr. Fred Barry, postmaster from 1960, who retired on the December 17, 1965, also rented from Mr. Wing. The office remained a Group Office until the October 16, 1970 when it became a Grade 1, following a Unit of Work Survey. Subsequent to this, the Department of Public Works was requested to provide us with a new S.P. 1 building or acceptable rented premises. In accordance with the terms of the collective agreement, the postmaster continued to receive a rental allowance and provided premises under his own arrangement pending the provision of suitable Grade 1 office accommodation by D.P.W. The present postal premises

Mr. Speaker: In the resolution of the matter I also have to take into account that pursuant to Standing Order 26 only one of the opposition days or allotted days has yet been used in the trimester which ends shortly, and therefore must be considered to pose fairly soon a reasonable opportunity for discussion of this matter. For that reason, and also for another reason which I think is consistent in respect of work stoppages of this sort, it seems to the Chair that in the area of the strike, work stoppage or negotiation itself—however that whole arena is described—as long as there is some activity which might produce a resolution within itself, then there would be resistance—not necessarily refusal, but certainly resistance—by the Chair to have parliament conduct a debate when it is open to speculation whether it would have a beneficial or an adverse effect on the outcome of the proceedings.

The specific activity, to be clear about what I refer to now, is not that talks or negotiations are carrying on, but that there is an obvious activity within the union which I think the Chair cannot ignore. As long as that activity may produce some kind of resolution, at least for the first application which is made pursuant to Standing Order 26, it would be my inclination to allow us to await a few more days' development to see what happens. I am sure that this in no way precludes the hon. member who raised this question today from raising it again two days from now, which is Friday, or at the beginning of next week if the developments in the area of negotiations and discussions themselves take a turn for the worse, or I have an indication that they are not about to bear fruit or to resolve the conflict.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

POST OFFICE

POSTAL STRIKE—TABLING OF PETITION FROM SOUTHERN MANITOBA

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition bearing the signatures of 2,862 residents of southern Manitoba. This petition was prepared and gathered by postal employees in the federal riding of Provencher who, along with many other postal workers, feel that the postal strike should end and that members who are presently on strike should be called back to work. The petition reads in part: "We, the undersigned people of southern Manitoba"—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has leave just to file the petition.