

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Mr. Stevens: A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Since the President of the Treasury Board took to the airwaves, TV and the print media during the time of this strike to indicate how firm he was going to be in disciplining those who would break the strike or act illegally, I note that the press release from the Public Service Alliance states—and this is in quotes—“According to the agreement the employer would freeze disciplinary action”.

Would the President of the Treasury Board indicate why the Public Service Alliance has said that, in view of the inconsistency in his press release in that he claims that he does intend to go ahead and discipline the various employees who may have broken the law? In short, has he in truth turned out to just be a mouse that was roaring?

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, I have indicated on many occasions, as the hon. member for York-Peel rightly points out, that we consider disciplinary action, where there is illegal strike activity, to be an essential element in the collective bargaining process in order to make that process effective.

An hon. Member: “But—”

Mr. Johnston: I can assure the hon. member for York-Peel that, notwithstanding what he may have read into any press release from the Public Service Alliance, which I, incidentally, have not seen—

Mr. Stevens: There it is.

Mr. Johnston: —the arrangement is very clear. Employees who are subject to disciplinary action will receive notice of discipline from their respective departments. Then a special joint review committee will be established, consisting of a representative or representatives of the union and representatives of the employer, to determine whether the discipline recommended by the department is fair and just in the circumstances. We think it only fair, due to certain controversies that have arisen in particular parts of the country, that those circumstances should be objectively determined before discipline is, in fact, applied.

If there is any disagreement, it will be referred to a third party, appointed by the PSSRB, and discipline will be applied in the normal fashion. In other words, if you like, this is a more expeditious review process to the normal grievance procedure, which these employees may also use if they care to; we are not excluding that possibility. The fact is there is no amnesty; there is no partial amnesty. Discipline will be applied as we have indicated. I hope the hon. member is satisfied with that situation.

Mr. Stevens: You had better explain that to the union.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Wait till Andy Stewart gets hold of that.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

THE CONSTITUTION—INQUIRY AS TO AMOUNT SPENT ON PROGRAM

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Madam Speaker, my question was to be directed to the Minister of State (Multiculturalism) in charge of government advertising or the Minister of Justice who is in charge of the constitution, so I shall ask it of the Right Hon. Prime Minister. The question concerns the continuing partisan advertising of the government of his constitutional package. In view of the present situation where the proposed resolution is before this House, could the Prime Minister tell this House and Canadians how much money has been authorized for spending on advertising, on billboards, in the print media and on television, for example, regarding the constitution, and whether the government has also approved additional spending?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member realizes, that kind of statistical question is better asked in the order paper or after having given notice.

An hon. Member: Give or take a million.

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, give or take a million. I do not know the figures, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Epp: Madam Speaker, again the Right Hon. Prime Minister. It might be correct that this question should be on the order paper, but questions have been asked of his ministers and we have not received the information in written form. I think it is imperative that as we now look at the constitution, and the debate is before us, referring back to his own Machiavellian memo, on pages 56 and 57 his advisers very clearly stated that it would be improper to advertise during the period of this debate.

I am asking the Prime Minister, therefore, in view of that advice—and he has followed every other bit of advice in that document to date—whether he will now give an order to withdraw the advertising on the constitution during the period that Parliament has this matter before it?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I must point out that when the hon. member refers to as my memo is, of course, a memo prepared by officials not under my supervision and one that they presented to the cabinet. I am happy now to see that the hon. member is quoting that memo with approval, and I hope he will realize that the thrust of that memo is that we should seek an agreement with the provinces.