

*Post Office*

We did not come here this afternoon to listen to an academic lecture on the mechanization of the Post Office. We came to hear what the Postmaster General might have to say about how he intends to resolve these problems. We did not hear that, and that is unpardonable. Not only is it unpardonable, but it is an affront to the chamber which anyone listening in the gallery who happens to be interested in these workers must find unforgivable. A little bit of compassion, coupled with an explanation lasting five minutes, and a reasonable approach to this problem by the Postmaster General would have yielded greater results this afternoon. I hope that the President of the Treasury Board will have the courage to defend his totally inadequate colleague from Montreal.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully and intently to every word uttered this afternoon by the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans).

**Mr. Forrestall:** What did he say.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** He went out of his way to contend that speakers on the opposition side of the House had indulged in irrelevancies; then, he proceeded to be as irrelevant on the issue that is before us as he possibly could be.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** I am hearing some remarks from the little Chicago area. I would be very happy if one of those hon. members would stand up and tell us of any one point raised by the Postmaster General that dealt with the issue before us.

**An hon. Member:** They are afraid to stand.

**An hon. Member:** Tell us what he said about the NDP.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** What is that issue, Mr. Speaker? The issue before us is getting the strike settled.

**Mr. Côté (Longueuil):** There is no strike.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The issue is not whether anyone is anxious to turn these rotating strikes into a general strike. There is no issue about taking away the right to strike. Nobody is proposing that—although the remarks of the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) came pretty close to that. That is not the issue. The issue before us is

that there is a dispute which has expressed itself in a series of rotating strikes, and everybody wants that situation settled. By "everybody" I mean the members of the House of Commons, the general public and the postal workers themselves. I submit that what cabinet ministers and government supporters ought to be doing in this debate is addressing themselves to ways in which the present strike situation can be settled with the least possible delay.

I said that the Postmaster General raised some matters that are irrelevant. I will not take time to deal with them. I do not blame the Postmaster General for wanting to score debating points, but I insist that the issue is getting this dispute settled. Despite the arguing by assertion in which the Postmaster General indulged, I submit that what stands in the way of the settling of this dispute is that the government is using the postal workers as pawns in its guidelines game. The Postmaster General says that this is obviously not so, because these negotiations began long before these guidelines were proposed. It does not matter when they were begun, because the government now is making it very clear to the postal workers that these guidelines hold and that nothing will be done for the postal workers that does not come inside these guidelines.

The Postmaster General confirmed that this afternoon. He said he believes in collective bargaining, including the right to strike. He believes in people sitting down across a table and working out their problems. But he said that those people on the other side of the table, the postal workers, should be reasonable; they should accept the 5 per cent offer that has been proposed to them as reasonable. Mr. Speaker, that is not collective bargaining. That is not bargaining in good faith. That is not bargaining on the basis of the merits of the issue. Actually, I submit that what is going on today is thoroughly dishonest. That is why the strike situation is continuing and why the postal workers have no option but to carry on with these rotating strikes in an attempt to bring pressure on their employers to meet the situation.

I strongly suspect that the government is relying on something else. The postal service has deteriorated so much already that the government thinks the people do not mind the interruptions which come from these one-day strikes, and that even if we get two of them in the same week, the people will put up with them. It is relying on the notion that