

defend those particular individuals. The minister has to defend his department whatever view he might hold privately. It is to be hoped that the minister will take a fresh look at the management and negotiating teams of the Post Office.

I reveal no particular confidence, because I do not intend to name anyone, but a number of years ago a former postmaster general revealed to me that his efforts to improve the Post Office and the management staff relationships within the Post Office were frustrated by appalling management attitudes and skills that existed at that time.

I recommend to the minister that, while I understand why he would choose, as he must, to defend two individual names, he look very thoroughly at some of the things relating to management skills, attitudes and negotiating attitudes that may have caused the kind of hostility, foot-dragging, entrenched positions, poor service, unhappiness and poor morale in the past. We must hope that in the future there will be a new attitude prevailing. In my view, most workers employed by the Post Office, regardless of their level, want to do a job for the public and are getting mighty tired of being the whipping boys for poor relations, business practices and working conditions about which they have little or no say.

May I conclude by saying that I welcome the sign that we have at least one minister on that side of the House who supports the addition of one more Crown corporation, rather than eliminating them right left and centre, which some of his colleagues seem dedicated to doing.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Chairman, may I say to my hon. friend that when so many are going, if one stays behind it will do no harm.

With respect to the hon. member's specific reference to the attitude of management in negotiating for a contract, let me assure all hon. members that, whatever the situation has been in the past, there is a very conscious awareness that the difficulties of the past were partly due, at least, to mistakes in judgment on the management side. There is a great consciousness of that, and I can assure all hon. members that I am satisfied that while we may not have developed all the skills necessary, the attitude is very much improving. I want to assure all hon. members again that I regard that improving attitude as a very essential ingredient of better relationships in the Post Office.

● (1710)

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Chairman, I want to follow up on my first question to the minister. His response narrowed down to what he has done in Winnipeg. Can we take it that the principle for the action he has taken in Winnipeg will be applied generally across the country, that the whole move regarding the location of mail boxes will be reviewed and those errors that occurred will be corrected in the areas I mentioned?

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Chairman, let me tell all hon. members that the Post Office has been operating under a very stern edict to operate as efficiently and effectively, from the point of

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view of cost, as possible. The consequence of that has been that where there were service functions that were not being utilized or were redundant, these were examined and studied. Steps were taken to cut them back or eliminate them altogether.

What happened in the city of Winnipeg was that a program was instituted to cut back on the number of boxes. What was found after that had been completed was brought to my attention by hon. members, originally by the hon. member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine and the hon. member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry, namely that too many boxes had been taken away. The consequence was that old age pensioners and older people were in a very difficult position.

I considered with care the representations brought before me. I am fully aware that this is a winter country and as a consequence I made changes. If the hon. member has a situation in his constituency or city which he thinks I should consider, I am prepared to do so. I am not prepared to say in this House that we are suddenly going to put back all of the post boxes taken away in a program designed to eliminate those not being used.

Mr. Benjamin: Just so we will not have to go through it all again, Mr. Chairman, perhaps the minister can go through the correspondence he received from not only Winnipeg and Regina but other cities. If he looks at that, we will not have to do it all over again.

Mr. Fraser: I suggest the hon. member speak to me. I have heard a lot of complaints about postal service this afternoon. The complaints I have received from my colleagues in the cabinet, and from those outside the cabinet on the other side of the House since we have come back, are as to whether I can do anything to cut off the mail.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Chairman, I have six questions. I will begin with the sixth one. Very shortly CUPW and the Post Office employees will start negotiating a new contract, I believe in December. Rumours are going around that somehow or other the Department of Labour will take over the negotiations on behalf of the Post Office Department. Will the minister advise whether there has been any change in terms of persons who will be negotiating on behalf of the Post Office Department with the workers?

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Chairman, I can say to the hon. member that I will take every step to ensure that the most appropriate people are engaged in the bargaining.

Mr. Rodriguez: I am not going to be brushed off that easily. There are rumours to the effect that moves are being made by the labour department to take over negotiations on behalf of the Post Office Department. Is that rumour true or untrue? If it is true, will the minister tell us what role Treasury Board will be playing and what role his negotiators will be playing? That is extremely important, or we will be back to square one again.

Mr. Fraser: The Department of Labour will not be taking over the negotiations. With regard to the role of Treasury