

Postal Service Policies

calculations. But last Tuesday, the minister quickly passed from humour to something more typical of him. He is occasionally humorous but very often he is, as he was a few minutes later, when he made a comment which will not, I think, be quickly forgotten but which will, I am convinced, never be cited as a model of comment for good labour-management relations dialogue. On that same page he is reported as saying:

People who seek contractual obligations sometimes seek not the work but the pay without work.

This was some contribution to make at the time of delicate discussions on a sensitive issue. Possibly it forecasts another crisis in his department. Is it any wonder that the press and public across the land have made the Postmaster General the No. 1 target of criticism and denunciation, edging out even the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford) for that honour? It is not surprising that even the minister himself is now advancing again in the direction of proclaiming the virtues of the establishment of a Crown corporation. Over a year ago I predicted that such a move would come, not because a Crown corporation of itself in this area would be such a wonderful arrangement, but because the minister, having proven—and he has been given two years to do it—his total incapacity to run his department efficiently, smoothly and well, wishes to seek the only way out of his colossal failure. He wants to wash his hands of it and say that it cannot be run as effectively as it should be. There is uproar. The minister says, "We cannot do the job," hence his recipe of a Crown corporation. What a confession of failure, sir, this is. The confession of failure will be noted. Perhaps it is right that the minister should finally, in this way, make a confession of failure—a rather muted confession because the minister is not a man whose public humility shows too much.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macquarrie: But the act will be a more eloquent confession than he could ever bring himself to make in words. So, we are at the stage where it is being recognized, apparently, that the present government cannot operate this department, that something must be done, and that a Crown corporation is the answer.

I wonder, can we overstress the seriousness of mismanagement in this sector of the governmental service, one of the most important departments of the government so far as the

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

average Canadian is concerned! There are many people in Canada, humble people, for whom the delivery of a letter is perhaps the most important service the government can render.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macquarrie: This is a well established, ancient public service, and we find that in the last two years it has become the laughing-stock of the country. People are paying more than ever before and getting less for their money, and the minister's only answer is to throw down a little stardust. He used to talk much about the communications satellite. Whenever there was trouble in the Post Office, there would be a speech about the communications satellite. But now even that refuge is gone, because we know the satellite will go up much later than forecast and will cost a great deal more than the minister anticipated. There will not be so much talk about that. Now, there is the suggestion of the Crown corporation, put forward as if it were a forward step instead of a confession of failure.

I have indicated, I think, that I have something less than complete confidence in this minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macquarrie: I think, if ever anyone stated the obvious, I have done so. I think, too, that I have been saying what everyone in Canada knows. I should like to bring my remarks to a close, not because I am short of ideas, but because I am short of time. I should like to say a word about the current problem which might become a crisis. Indeed, the first quotation in the *Labour News Headlines* issued under the authority of the minister's colleague indicates that conditions will be pretty bad. It reads:

CANADA'S SECOND MAIL STRIKE in less than two years appears inevitable today. The 27,000 members of the Letter Carriers' Union of Canada and the Canadian Union of Postal Employees will take formal strike votes today and on Wednesday, but the outcome is a foregone conclusion. With the approval of the rank and file, union leaders in Ottawa could call a strike as early as the end of the week.

That quotation was taken from the *Gazette*, and is included in the *Labour News Headlines* of May 19.

Mr. Orlikow: I cannot understand that. The ministers are such good friends!

Mr. Macquarrie: I wonder if the shock waves of this man's disturbing influence ever