

Montreal Postal Strike

cially if they are dictatorial measures, that do not rely on the co-operation of union leaders, on negotiation and consultation, and next year, we will have to cope with a new problem, even if the minister says it will not be next year, but five years from now.

It seems to me the communications field is of such importance that we should act seriously and try to prevent situations such as this one.

That we have known eight Postmasters General since 1962 seems to me significant enough. That is an indication that there is no long-term policy in that department, but a short-sighted one which may serve the ministers' interests while they hold office but surely does not serve the people's interests. Therefore, I invite the government members—without any political ambition but on the contrary very sincerely—to read the Kates, Peat and Marwick report and they will see that my criticisms are but a repetition of that report.

Before concluding, I should like to point out that the most serious thing I have against the minister is that he has been saying for several days that the Department of Labour and the Department of Manpower and Immigration are ready to intervene and that besides, they have already taken steps.

When the Postmaster General has the floor, I should like him to clearly state the position of the government and the steps he intends to take to settle this conflict because dictatorial measures are out of the question. It would be desirable to know what bargaining measures he intends to use to settle the conflict in Montreal, not only for this year but also for the coming years, while providing the employees with job security.

I should like the minister to tell us what progress he has made in his discussions with his colleagues in the cabinet so that his department can show that it does serve the people and that it is not simply dedicated to ensure the good name of the minister.

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

I hope that if the Postmaster General and Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans) speaks, he will not close the debate.

Mr. Kierans: No, not at all.

Some hon. Members: No, no.

Mr. Kierans: Hon. members will have the opportunity to be heard.

[Mr. Fortin.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I should like to make one or two things clear at the outset. Some hon. members opposite have called for the intervention of my colleagues the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey), the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. MacEachen). I simply say to hon. members that if they are seeking to divide the government, this is a government decision. This decision has been taken by all members of the government, and all members of the government are solidly behind it. I, myself, have suggested on various occasions to the secretary general of the CNTU that he contact my colleagues.

We are unanimous on another point. I refer again to the ministers who have been mentioned, the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. They are completely unanimous on this point: We will begin to talk when the violence stops.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kierans: One hon. member has spoken of the destruction of a union. We are speaking of the annual destruction of mail service to 2.5 million people for no other purpose than to bludgeon and blackmail the government of Canada, through its contracts, into prices and tariffs that are beyond all reason. This has gone in since 1954, and it is not going on any longer. The Minister of Labour, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, as well as all members of the government, are determined on this. We are not destroying any union. The union is destroying itself.

The union is now in a position of having led its members in such a way that they can no longer find an employer. Last year Rod Services said it could no longer deal with the union and carry on the service; it asked to be relieved. The present activities and violence of the union and its influence on its members are driving its present employer into a position where he will either ask to be relieved of his contract or go bankrupt. So once again these men will be without an employer. And what does the union suggest to me, as minister? They suggest, as they suggested last March: You create for us a new employer, a Crown corporation. It could take us all in, whether you need us all or not. There are 455 of us now; last March there were 397.