

Postal Service Policies

folio—one for which by personality, temperament, background and value scale he is uniquely unsuited.

One might ask how many culminations are we to have? How much more must the people of Canada endure before someone up there decrees that this is the wrong minister doing the wrong things in the wrong department? I am not going to say at the wrong time—I would say all the time.

For many months the minister's lack of finesse and sensitivity in dealing with people in his domain and the people of the country has been demonstrated to the rueful regret of the people of this land. Need I refer to the magnificent mishandling of the Lapalme workers and the awarding of new contracts? The people of Montreal paid for that through week after week of poor service or no service. The people of the whole country will pay, too. The full accounting is not yet in.

But lest we believe that the minister may have lost the art of turning the incredible into the disastrous and making a fiasco out of any given bungle, his eruption of a few days ago reassured us that not much had changed, despite his long absence. He was back again in the headlines and again in trouble. On the eve of a strike vote, and at a time when representatives of the government were discussing matters with representatives of his workers, he erupted in the *Globe and Mail* as reported by one of that newspaper's respected and efficient reporters, David Crane. This was the helpful comment which he made:

● (12:30 p.m.)

The Post Office is in serious trouble—management still has a long way to go to get into the 20th century, poor morale, lack of opportunity, poor pay lack of opportunity for advancement.

Then, lest that be insufficient denigration of his side to aid the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) who will be involved in these matters, he went on to make some other observations and made us wonder about some of these reported rumbles in the cabinet itself. He is reported as saying:

One problem is that the Post Office does not negotiate its final contracts with its employees. Post Office management has no bargaining power since postal pay increases and working conditions are determined in effect by the Cabinet and Treasury Board.

What was the purpose of that observation? Was there a little pressure on someone, a colleague perhaps? Was that a subtle suggestion that the Post Office and its maestro are really benevolent but that those Treasury

people and perhaps some of the other ministers may not be? One wonders what he had in mind at that time.

Then, lest the public should lose interest in this dynamic administrator, Mr. Crane states in this article:

With time running out for the Post Office, Mr. Kierans and his officials are hopeful they can convince the Cabinet and Parliament of the need for change.

But a number of critical skirmishes lie ahead and these could easily upset the timetable for postal reform. The slow parliamentary pace of change being what it is,—

It is our fault, now.

—the country could have to undergo another national postal crisis along the lines of the present one before the postal corporation opens for business.

So, we are assured that unhappy days are still ahead.

We do not need to remain with the pages of the *Globe and Mail* to chronicle the minister's helpful contributions towards a smoothly running and efficient postal service. On Tuesday last, after his remarkable comment, as is reported at page 7062 of *Hansard* as follows:

Over the next five years the work force of the Post Office will expand by some 5,000 people, primarily to meet the increase in volume,—

He said:

—if the Canadian public continues to have confidence in the services of the Post Office.

Hansard then reports:

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macquarrie: Questioning the confidence that the Canadian people have in his department is about as inane a comment as Nero might have made at a certain juncture when he said, "It's getting warm here." But the minister has been known to be humorous before. In the fall of 1969 he made the memorable proclamation that "99 per cent of the mail is delivered the next day 99 per cent of the time, and that's a conservative estimate." Here is a man who was responsible for blacking out the Saturday delivery. He is such a genius at mathematics as to assume that less than 1 per cent of all mail in Canada is put into our mail boxes on Friday.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macquarrie: I wonder whether that minister used the old computers of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) in making these