

*Montreal Postal Strike*

The minister concluded his letter by stating three solutions, but nothing further was done. His first solution was as follows and I quote:

How can we assure the best service for the people of Montreal between now and March 31?

This first basic question asked by the minister in his letter is once again a short-term policy. He finds it essential to know how the mail will be delivered until March 31. He is not worried about giving an efficient postal service, but about what will happen between now and March 31.

However, the employees wish to know what will happen not only between now and March 31, but also after that date.

Here is the second question of the minister:

Secondly, how can we ensure the continued employment of the greatest number of present employees, with priority being given to the 162 men with more than five years service; thirdly, what are the best arrangements that can be made with Manpower to admit the remainder to paid retraining programs.

I eliminate the third one because the list of those who would like to benefit from the retraining programs is already very long. Let us examine the second question.

When I first read it, it seemed to have some merit. The means of ensuring job security at least to the 162 employees who had five years experience or more appeared to be worth considering. So I dug up the files and discovered something which I should like to bring to the minister's attention—a CNTU press release dated February 5, 1969. Obviously, the release was given to the newspapers and the minister and all members must have received a copy. I think it would be worthwhile to read it tonight, during this emergency debate. When I read it, I realized that I was right when I claimed that it was a short-term policy and that the second proposition of the government was unacceptable. The press release deals with the conflict with Rod Service Ltd. and reads as follows:

After that, the Post Office Department informed the union leaders that it would provide these services on its own, but it also called for tenders from three contractors, including Rod Service Ltd., in order to let out new contracts for these services.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we make a comparison, we find this is what is happening now in the dispute relating to Lapalme Inc.

The communique continues:

One thing is certain: the net result of all these operations is that 111 dismissals have been announced yesterday by the company to the union, 38 of which concerned the special delivery service and 12 the mobile delivery.

During the dispute which took place in Montreal in August 1968, 111 dismissals were announced to the union. The union was caught off guard. They were ready for it in a way but not to the extent of fighting against a minister who disregards consultations and negotiations. You will remember the famous crisis of August 1968.

These same workers were then threatened to lose their jobs. They come up this year against the same problem. The quotation continues:

So, the wheel is beginning to turn:

—says the CNTU. And it was right because it had anticipated that the same release could be used again this year.

● (8:50 p.m.)

On February 5th, the CNTU stated, and I quote:

—111 employees lose their jobs, tomorrow others will also lose them. When will the 420 members of the union be out on the street?

That is the question the CNTU asked on February 5th in its press release; today we are up against the problem of knowing what to do with those employees.

Mr. Speaker, I should not overstay my leave but it seems to me that today's problem could have been foreseen. In spite of my limited experience in that field, it seems to me that if the Postmaster General had been more conciliating, had he worked harder at negotiations, if he had taken the trouble of going out to the parties instead of convening them to his office, had he gone out to meet the employees or at least the union leaders in short, had he taken into account the representations made in 1969, he might perhaps understand the drama now taking place in Montreal.

Mr. Speaker, it may be that government members will accuse us of wanting to play politics with this question, but by putting ourselves in the shoes of those employees who are threatened with being laid off, it is obvious to us that the department has a short-term policy with regard to personnel management, personnel planning, and that the conflict could have been avoided.

That does not necessarily mean that the minister is solely to blame, but the fact remains that if the minister is honest, he will have to admit his failings, because he is mainly responsible for those lay-offs.

I suggest this conflict will increase more and more in scope in spite of the extraordinary measures the minister may take, espe-