

Postal Service

with a copy of the two questions which we agreed would be asked during today's oral question period. If I can manage to get the eye of the Speaker I shall put these questions to you.

I trust that your office will be able to resolve this problem in Prince Rupert.

The Postmaster General had almost four hours between the time I gave him notice of my question and the time I asked it during the oral question period. If he did not have time to investigate the matters relevant to our discussion the previous evening, he could have sent me a note and I would have delayed raising the issue on Tuesday, but he did not do that.

During the question period I rose and asked question No. 2. When quoting the letter I failed to read the questions I referred to earlier. I will do so at this time. Question No. 1 is as follows: Does the Postmaster General have any evidence of racial discrimination directed against the President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers in Prince Rupert, British Columbia? Question No. 2, which is the only one I asked, since I was ruled out of order, is as follows:

Did the Postmaster General or any of his officials authorize the telephone calls in the Prince Rupert post office to be monitored with an automatic tape recorder?

Since Your Honour ruled this question out of order, I posted the question for debate on Tuesday during the late show. I again remind the house the minister had at least five and a half hours in which to either complete his investigation or alternatively request that I postpone my debate, something I have done for other ministers and would have done again. I heard nothing from the minister or anyone in his office, so I proceeded.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that every step of this procedure was designed to avoid making the minister or the Prince Rupert postmaster the victims of a legislative ambush. I feel I was the one ambushed. I felt that I was operating in such a way as to ameliorate a difficult local situation and prevent a possible walk-out. Naturally, I was shocked when in reply to my speech the minister accused me of attacking a defenceless man and stated that he had not been given an opportunity to investigate the case. The minister at no time requested postponement on the grounds that his investigation was incomplete.

The minister's reply to me can be read. He did investigate some of my allegations because, as reported at page 8675 of *Hansard*, he lamely explained the reason for the presence of a recording device that had been

attached to the receiver of the only telephone in the building. On our way out of the chamber I voiced my protest to the minister about the way he handled the whole matter and about the fact I had been accused of "taking a deplorable position", in spite of my efforts to avoid this position, while he, on the other hand, came out of this exchange as "Mr. Kleen", the staunch defender of personal freedom. At that time also I told the minister that if because of some misunderstanding between us, the minister and I, I had destroyed a defenceless man, I would publicly apologize. That offer still holds. The minister, in his anger, then replied that enough damage had been caused and that any more words on the subject would only make things worse. Therefore, I said no more.

• (8:10 p.m.)

But who raised this issue again today, Mr. Speaker? Who was it in an emotional diatribe this afternoon raised this matter once again in his infantile struggle to extricate himself from any blame for rotten postal service? It was none other than that great public defender, that Perry Mason of the postal service, the minister himself.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I cannot produce documentation of private discussions that took place prior to and throughout this issue between the minister and myself. It is his word against mine, and he usually has the last word. I know that some of my speeches in the past have harassed the minister, but I believed him to be an honourable man, even if I did not show equal confidence in his policies or administration.

I told the minister privately I would apologize if anything I said was unfair, and I do so again publicly. I am pleased that his office is continuing the investigation, as I understand the postmaster in question is in Vancouver today discussing the problem with some senior departmental officials. Incidentally, these departmental officials were not moved to such rapidity until this whole issue was raised.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have learned one thing from this whole exchange. This is the first and the last time I will ever share any confidences with the said minister or make any effort to seek a resolution to postal problems in a quiet, dignified, and what I consider to be an honourable way.

Mr. Kierans: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. On Monday night at about a quarter to ten, it may have been twenty to ten in this house, the hon. member