

When the government can straighten out its confused policies—and there is no area of greater confusion, although I have mentioned the economy and fiscal policy and the Post Office—in regard to communications, it will be a good thing all around.

Eleven years ago the Hon. Eric Kierans anticipated what should be done. He designed a program which, had it been brought to fruition, would have alleviated all the stress, the trouble and confusion—the bankruptcies and strikes that have plagued the Post Office Department, during the past ten years. Mr. Kierans bailed out of this government, of course, as did the Hon. John Turner and the Hon. Donald Macdonald. Hon. Jim Richardson from Manitoba left the government as well. I think a great deal of credit should be given to Mr. Kierans, who tried to bring some order out of chaos.

The real problem in the Post Office, of course, is the deterioration in labour relations which has occurred because of the failure of the Liberal government to act over the past 12 years or so. I have in front of me the Shime report which was prepared for the minister in 1972. It is the report of the conciliation board arising out of inquiries into labour difficulties in the public service. At that time Mr. Owen Shime was vice-chairman of the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Had the recommendations of the Shime report been accepted, the difficulties and strike problems that have accumulated during the decade of the seventies would have been resolved.

Perhaps I should just put on record what we have gone through in terms of labour disruptions in the seventies because of the Liberal government's failure to act. In February and March, 1970, there were disruptions as a result of a dispute in Montreal involving truck drivers represented by the CNTU. The problem was contracting of mail transport and job security. From May to September, in 1970, there was a series of rotating strikes over the question of wages and job security.

In October and November, 1971, there were several wildcat strikes in southwestern Ontario and the maritimes over the use of casual labour. In January, 1973, there were wildcat strikes after breakdowns in negotiations over wages and job classifications. In April, 1974, there were sporadic local labour disruptions by inside postal workers, culminating in a three-day national strike.

February and March of 1975 saw five weeks of nationwide rotating strikes by maintenance workers. Truck drivers refused to cross picket lines and the dispute was characterized by lay-offs, walkouts and "sickouts". From October to December of the same year there was a seven-week strike engineered by CUPW over questions of technological change. The hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Mackasey) is not here today. I was hoping he might be because as a result of his experience in 1975 he produced a great book. I ask everybody to read this book which was published by the Post Office Department in June, 1976. I hope the minister has read it. It has a most revealing title: "What's behind the Lemming Urge? and Other Discourses by Bryce Mackasey". I have read the book many times because the title indicates its contents—we are all going over the precipice together; let us do something to stop it. The

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author was not referring only to postal affairs but to the general decline and deterioration of values, parliamentary democracy, responsible government and the whole business. I often refer to his closing paragraph which reads:

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We're moving beyond ideology; we're responding to necessity. Our choice, as Buckminster Fuller says, is between Utopia and oblivion.

That book resulted from the 1975 seven-week strike by the postal workers. There were many bankruptcies. Small businesses went out of business because it was their harvest period just before Christmas. It was one of the great economic disasters in Canada.

In October, 1976, there were four days of rotating strikes by CUPW over technological change. In September, 1978, there was a three-day strike by letter carriers over contract demands. The inside workers who went on strike in October of that year were ordered back to work by Parliament and the Canadian postal workers' president went to jail as a result. That was the ultimate deterioration in the system.

Finally the government acted and brought in that monstrosity of a bill, Bill C-27 which I have just read. That bill would have perpetuated the chaos. It envisaged a two-tier system having the Postmaster General, his staff, secretariat and all his employees running parallel with a corporation which would have no authority whatsoever. It would be hard to decide where the buck stopped and it would have added confusion upon confusion. Fortunately the government was defeated and we had a chance to bring down in the form of legislation some of the things we had been advocating over the years.

The Uberig report was very important because it was a report of an assistant deputy minister, a deputy postmaster general. This person is still with the Post Office Department and he is one of the most competent people I have encountered in administration. At long last the things which he said in his report of August, 1975, are to be incorporated in this legislation.

I cannot end this discussion without referring to the Finkelman report. Mr. Finkelman made a report through a joint parliamentary committee on which I had the pleasure of serving. We came in with some marvellous recommendations but the report has been gathering dust ever since.

Let me just deal with a few of the details of old Bill C-27 and new Bill C-42. We are now heading in the right direction. The Postmaster General pleaded with hon. members not to debate this issue too long. We have been waiting for years to get our teeth into this discussion. I am sure that no one is going to abuse the privilege that is now afforded to deal with the substance of the deteriorating situation in the Post Office.

In our attempts to get the government to come to grips with the problem, we spent two opposition days trying to point out that the Post Office Department was in serious trouble. Let me at least refer to two motions, which I think hon. members will agree in light of what the Postmaster General has said embrace some of the ideas he brought forward this afternoon.