

Five Day Postal Delivery

I wish the hon. gentleman well, I hope no unduly disturbing meaning should be read into the expression "differences between two sides have been essentially resolved". The reports I read in the press from parties concerned and from representatives of the workers cause me to give that word "essentially" a good deal of emotional loading, to use a literary expression. It is extremely important that in the face of drastic increases in rates there should be no diminution in service. If as a result of changes which have been only partially planned and arranged, the Canadian people suffer a diminution in service, I am sure the minister will hear about it.

So often has it happened in the past, especially in the instance of the last general strike, that at ministerial and departmental levels there seemed to have been no adequate preparation. Here we have drastic changes which do not appear to have been adequately arranged and discussed before implementation. I can only hope the optimism the minister has expressed will be borne out in the event.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) I noticed the qualification in the minister's statement that the differences have essentially been resolved. The fact, as I am sure the minister knows, is that a large number of the employees affected are still not satisfied, and that the unions are quite convinced that the differences have not been resolved to the satisfaction of the employees of the post office.

Let me say to the minister that, as I have watched his performance on this question over the weeks, it has seemed to me that he carried his decision through in a rather ruthless way, in a way with which an employer concerned with profit making rather than with service to the Canadian people is usually associated. The minister should have learned by now that if he is going to make this kind of change the unions and employees should be consulted before he makes up his mind, instead of making up his mind, announcing the policy and then trying to persuade the unions to accept it.

When the minister says he has heard that there will not be any strikes, slowdowns or work to rule, let me tell him that this is not the result of anything that he has done, but the sole result of the sense of responsibility of the leaders of these unions that are giving essential service to the Canadian people. It is

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

no thanks to him that there is no interruption of mail delivery at the present time.

It seems to me that when the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) this morning assured the representatives of the Canadian Labour Congress, as he has assured this house on previous occasions, that he believes in the principle of the Freedman report that we will not have any changes in work load or work function without consultation and without the unions having some say, this is one government undertaking of great importance where that principle could and should have been introduced by the minister himself.

I share the hopes of the hon. member for Hillsborough that the minister's optimism will be realized, and I merely make two brief comments in conclusion. I understand there has been an increase in the rates for rural postal boxes, and there has been an immense increase in the rates for non-profit publications, to which objection has been taken right across the country and again voiced this morning. While the minister may be able to save some money—though this still remains to be seen—I suggest to him that his performance in all these areas has made a good many of us very leery about the kind of operation he is now heading.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, several reports have been coming to us for some time to the effect that postal employees are considering the possibility of a work stoppage because of misunderstandings with the Post Office Department.

In view of that situation, Mr. Speaker, and having now looked into the minister's statement, I shall make three comments.

First of all, the new regulations have been inadequately explained by the department to the public as well as to the employees themselves.

Then, the new work programs are inadequately prepared. That is why we are facing an urgent situation, partly due to those new regulations.

Moreover, I would like to comment briefly on the lack of harmony in labour-management relations on the levels of information and of dialogue.

According to the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans), such dissatisfaction on the part of postal employees is due to the lack of information given by the department about the new regulations and their implications.