

*Postal Service Policies*

people. That does not answer the question. He then went on to say that there was no possibility of automation or productivity outstripping the present work force, and here I quote, "People who seek contractual obligations sometimes seek not the work but the pay without the work." Such a statement was unwarranted and, I suggest, at a time when one might expect a greater degree of sensitivity from the government, almost calculated to inflame the unions which have been attempting to bargain in good faith on behalf of their 27,000 members.

The statement has been described as scandalous and irresponsible. But anyone who has watched closely the performance of the Postmaster General might have expected it. When I suggest that the statement was calculated to inflame, I mean precisely that. Is it mere accident that the Postmaster General stumbles into situations, throws spanners into delicate negotiations and steamrollers over the rights of postal workers? I do not believe so. Time after time he has shown himself seemingly incapable of understanding when it comes to the rights of other people. In the dispute that last year went to arbitration it was said again that the Post Office management was arrogant and high-handed and that management's conduct had created unrest, undermined morale and resulted in the development of hostility.

The Postmaster General—and I prefer that title to Minister of Communications because he does not communicate as well as we would wish—cannot ignore the charge. After all, he is top of the heap of arrogance and high-handed action. In fact, we have only to see him perform in the House to have a fine appreciation of where the trouble in the Post Office originates. He tiptoed into the Lapalme affair like a Sherman tank and the end result was confusion, violence, destruction and a chaotic mail service. This time the official verdict handed down by Commissioner Goldenberg was that the Post Office management had made "a serious omission" regarding the future employment of Lapalme workers, and the Post Office had ignored a moral obligation to seek to protect the employment of these workers.

Only yesterday, writing in the *Montreal Star*, Professor Bernard Brody, an economist who is a member of the Department of Industrial Relations of the University of Montreal, said:

Heightened militancy, fanned by additional fears of job elimination, was produced, unnecessarily in

[Mr. Southam.]

this writer's opinion, by Eric Kierans' recent Lapalme fiasco. The incredible, short-sighted mishandling of the Montreal postal trucking situation turns up to explain part of the bad feelings, mistrust, suspicion and aggressiveness.

The words are "incredible, short-sighted mishandling." It leads one to believe that the minister has put his foot in it again. But has he? Was it an accident? I think not, Mr. Speaker. It all becomes part of a pattern, the pattern that records the behaviour of a spoiled child for whom the rod should not have been spared. Spare the rod and you spoil the child, and in this case you shatter what confidence the public had in our Post Office service and rob the people providing that service of the one thing they seek, job security.

Look at his record, Mr. Speaker. If any member of this House had to work for the minister, the first thing he would have written into his job contract would be job security. The Lapalme situation became such a mess that the Postmaster General has members of the cabinet at war with each other. He was forced to move out of the frontline while others were left to patch the holes. A nationwide strike looms over the postal service and members on both sides of the House can breathe a sigh of relief knowing that the Postmaster General is nowhere to be seen. Things are bad enough as it is, with the government carrying its anti-inflation banner into negotiations—"take what we give you or join the ranks of the unemployed. There are plenty to take your place." But the Postmaster General has been sulking in the wings. Then he comes back and gives an interview that even to the government must have been regarded as the most extraordinary thing. He is back where he likes to be—in the headlines and in trouble—and the damage has been done.

He follows this with a statement to the House to the effect that people who seek contractual obligations sometimes seek not the work but the pay without the work. Is this the sort of attitude that helps negotiations or helps to avert strikes? Does anyone in the House really regard the actions of the minister or his seemingly irresponsible statements as an accident? He has engineered this whole bagful of trouble. The sooner he goes, the better for the government, the better for the Post Office and the better for the Canadian public.