

Post Office

Higher levels of management were generally critical of the deputy's preoccupation with labour problems. This preoccupation has resulted in poor management.

In other words, if you have a situation of confrontation between labour and management in the post office, you become completely absorbed in that difficulty. Other areas of concern must of necessity be neglected. Another statement reads:

Advisory Committee agendas are laden with petty issues (committee composed of deputy, assistant deputies and regional general managers).

Because of the confrontation in the post office and the thousands of grievances that constantly overwhelm and threaten to absorb completely the attention of the higher level of management, the more important issues are obviously neglected. It also makes the point that postmasters general are changed too frequently. That is a very good observation. Another point:

Political prominence of the P.O. in each community ensures a high degree of parliamentary and public interest in its operations.

Over past five years (1970-74) the P.O. has consistently been the subject of more parliamentary questions than any other major government department or agency. Monopolizes the attention of top people.

Here is the essence of wisdom:

Significant departmental organizational adjustment is essential to correct the deficiency.

It is a marvellous report. If it had been made available to members of parliament, it would have assisted in the process of discussions from the standpoint of knowledge rather than the facade of secrecy in which the post office has attempted to shroud itself. If there is ignorance of what is going on, imagination outraces the actual situation.

As a result of this presentation today, I hope the Postmaster General, who is in the chamber, will be persuaded to table the document so we might get on with the job of constructive criticism and reorganization. The report deals with the decentralization issue. I have received a lot of complaints from postal workers across the country about this particular area. It states and I quote:

It was intended that there be a reduction in employees from a level of approximately 1300, which existed at the beginning of decentralization, to a planned 400-600 on full implementation. Regional offices were also expected to be comparatively lean in man-years, comprising some 30 functional experts. Five years later the headquarters man-years budget had been increased to approximately 1900; the regional offices had virtually quadrupled in size.

This is a complaint I get from the workers. The Post Office Department is top heavy at the management level.

District offices increased significantly.

Mr. Darling: Too many chiefs and not enough Indians.

Mr. Dinsdale: That is one way of putting it.

Increases generated by addition of new areas of expertise such as industrial engineering, mechanization, language training, etc. Introduction of new functions at lower levels seemed inconsistent with the original concept of decentralization.

Since 1971-72, when decentralization first implemented, costs and man-years have risen much more rapidly than mail volumes, stimulating the departments deficit to a record level.

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

The organizational concept which was introduced also appears to have been notably divisive.

Decentralization created communications problems.

Study group not persuaded that regionalization is synonymous with decentralization and that the existence of four regions is desirable.

I could go on for some time reading the constructive observations of the Hay report. It made some interesting observations in the area of marketing. I quote:

The majority of marketing programs are seen as being at best non-compensatory and, at worst, sources of heavy financial losses.

Marketing staff are uninformed about postal operations.

Postpak—the service cited most frequently by marketing as being a notable achievement—was consistently and forcefully criticized by line managers across the country.

A serious communications problem exists within the organization as to the role and contribution of marketing.

Another point raised from time to time is getting trained personnel at the supervisory level, particularly those who are going to be in direct contact with the shop stewards on the floor. The report makes the following criticism:

New supervisors are frequently expected to make what is virtually an overnight transition from mail clerk to supervisor without even basic indoctrination in contemporary management techniques.

Here is one of the major problems. Instead of trying to solve difficulties in industrial relations on the floor of the plant, as is the technique in modern industry—

● (1752)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. The hon. gentleman's time has expired.

[*Translation*]

Hon. J.-Gilles Lamontagne (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I wonder why I bothered to come to the House this afternoon, since I will waste valuable time answering questions which have been submitted months ago.

I will repeat for the hon. member the answer I gave on April 6, and then I will add some remarks on his comparison between the recommendations of the Hay report and the situation that prevails in the United States. The Hay report consists of a confidential survey of what some management officials think of postal services. The objective of the report was to collect the opinions of different heads in various business enterprises across the country.

Some 5,870 directors of business enterprises were asked to answer a questionnaire frankly and honestly. The respondents had been given the assurance, that their answers would remain confidential. If I were to reveal today the content of the Hay report, I would be breaking this confidentiality commitment towards the respondents. That is why I regret to inform the hon. member that it is impossible for me to reveal the content of this report, first because of its confidential nature and second because it was authorized only for internal distribution.

I hope the hon. member will understand my position. This report was an assessment of a number of postal services. To