

*Montreal Postal Strike*

the CNTU, or one union local if you like, the bargaining agent for a number of firms. No precedent would have been set by this kind of action.

If it had been concerned about this question, the Post Office Department could have preserved the jobs of the workers involved for their well-being and that of their families. It could also have preserved an institution which is very important to these workers—the trade union local with which they had been associated. It seems to me that the opposite kinds of considerations have taken place, and it is hard to escape the conclusion that for whatever reason a deliberate attempt has been made to smash a trade union local. I think the minister has to answer for this action.

● (8:30 p.m.)

Quite beyond the particular question, it seems to me that this situation does suggest something about the government's attitude toward workers. How do they feel about the working people in this country, particularly about the people they employ themselves? A short while ago I asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in this House whether he was considering taking action in terms of law which would make it mandatory for an employer to give substantial notice to an employee before releasing him from his work.

As is frequently the case, the Prime Minister said this was a provincial matter. For once the Prime Minister is absolutely right. Most areas of labour legislation are within provincial domain. However, there is one very important area which is not within the provincial domain; that is the area of federal employees. It seems to me the Prime Minister could have indicated at that time—as could the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) and other ministers of the Crown—in the administration of the government and its departments a humane and progressive attitude toward the working people of this country. The government has the constitutional authority to do that.

The federal government is in a position to be a pacesetter in terms of labour legislation and attitudes towards labour in this country. Instead, what do we get? There are some exceptions, but the general pattern of this government—and I must say it seems to be the general pattern of this minister—is to put all the emphasis on technocratic market efficiency at the expense, very often, of working people in this country.

Again with particular reference to this minister, he is a man whose writings some time ago I admired because they suggested that at least here was one cabinet minister who knew something about modern social theory, who knew something about the non-technocratic aspects of existence and who seemed, as my colleague suggests, to talk a good fight—at least prior to the leadership convention of the Liberal Party. Had I been a delegate at that convention I suspect I would have voted for the minister. However, I must say that his performance in office, to understate the case by about 100 per cent, has not entirely measured up to my expectations because he, of all ministers, has seemed to revel in a complete preoccupation with market efficiency. I suspect that somewhere at the heart of this dispute we will find this was the big question.

We will get this argument from the minister: We had to change our procedures in Montreal. We had to change the employer that was doing the trucking because this would have resulted in a more efficient postal service. But I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that every serious, empirical study done in the United States and in Western Europe in the last ten years suggests that this kind of approach reaches the kind of conclusion we have here. It does not reach the conclusion that we have a more efficient enterprise, more productive and more contented workers. In fact we get just the opposite—discontent, inefficiency and wildcat strikes.

Every study in fact indicates—there have been a number in the past few years—that where working people are given serious consideration, where they are taken into the power structure in running enterprises, we get two very important by-products. We get greater, not less, efficiency by taking the worker more seriously. By treating him more as a human being we increase productivity. We also do this by giving him more power. All the evidence points to this fact.

The second and more important result so far as I am concerned is that you get happier workers, more contented human beings. I suggest to the minister that if he is really interested in efficiency he will begin to take the worker more seriously as a human being. Quite beyond that, I would like him to suggest to his colleagues in the cabinet, and particularly the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey), that the federal government begin to make basic changes in its management attitudes and in legislation as it affects federal employees. There is no better place to start