

Postal Rates

the work place which is in contrast to what we saw in the revolving door policy of the previous government with respect to the position of the postmaster general. Indeed, how can one develop a meaningful relationship based on trust and communication when every six months the door is revolved and, lo and behold, a new joker jumps up and becomes postmaster general? In the space of eight years we saw six postmasters general. Before we even became accustomed to one postmaster general, lo and behold, he would be gone to run the RCMP while another postmaster general arrived to succeed him. It seems that this is vastly different from what we saw previously.

What I was also impressed with was the minister's decisiveness with which he intends to deal directly with the trade union movement in the Post Office. In the previous postmaster general we had an isolationist. He prided himself on having effectively run the Quebec City administration without a strike. That was easy because there was no trade union in the Quebec City administration. He believed slavishly every single thing his top bureaucrats told him. He was new to the position, he did not trust his own judgment, and he was not prepared to be open and speak out truthfully on the situation.

The answers given by the present minister today show us that there is hope that he at least will get to the bottom of the problem and seek the source of it, whether it be in management, whether it be one of the workers, or whether it be a technological problem. That is most helpful indeed.

The last point I want to make before sitting down is on the question of bringing an order in council under the Financial Administration Act so Parliament can have a say on it. That is extremely important when the government which sits on the other side has only 38 per cent of the vote.

An hon. Member: No, 35 per cent.

An hon. Member: No, 36 per cent.

Mr. Rodriguez: I hear 36 per cent. I heard 35 per cent and I have also heard 38 per cent, so I will stay in the middle and keep to 36.5 per cent.

Mr. Knowles: How about 35.6 per cent?

Mr. Rodriguez: Well, somewhere between 35 per cent and 38 per cent of the vote. It is a very important principle. We all recognize the limited mandate that this imposes, in effect. The principle that this bill establishes, which is the principle of Parliament having a say on orders in council made under the Financial Administration Act, is an extremely important principle as we move toward "privateering". I refer to privateering de Havilland and privateering Canadair.

An hon. Member: "Buccaneering".

Mr. Rodriguez: We know full well, and I bring this to the attention of hon. members and to people's attention, that the union leadership of de Havilland met with the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens) who, when asked whether he would bring the decision of privateering to Parliament, said no, he would not. I think that that would really be flying in the

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

face of the principle which this government has started with Bill C-11.

So I urge members on the other side—and note that I am being reasonable today—

An hon. Member: You ought to see him on other days!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rodriguez: It is very obvious that the Postmaster General brings out the best in me. That is more than I can say about the previous "Evel Knievel". Therefore, I would urge that principle upon members on the other side and ask that they remain constant with that principle which the bill envisages. Sure, the government might adopt the position of privateering, but there are others in the House who oppose it, and there are people in the country who may have another opinion. After all, all of them did not vote for this government. Therefore, that principle should be preserved and Parliament should be allowed to decide. Let the people's elected representatives decide. I wish the minister well and I want him to know that my services as Post Office critic on this side of the House are at his disposal. Should he ever require them, I will certainly be available at any time and will co-operate in trying to develop the Post Office as a useful and serviceable institution for the people of Canada.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I will not delay the House very long but I want to commend the minister for what he has already done and express the hope that a great deal more will be done in order to get our mail moving the way we and the people of Canada expect it to move.

There are two points I would like to mention. My observations of the Post Office system since I have come here are, first, that there is not a definite chain of command throughout the Post Office. I find that there is authority at many of the local levels allowing the man in charge to make decisions and to have them carried out, but there has been so much red tape in the laws and regulations that have evolved over the last several years that it is not possible to hold a man responsible unless he is given authority to act, and if reference to Ottawa is required, which takes a period of three or four months, this does not lead to good administration at the local level or at any level, particularly at the regional level. These are able people, I believe, and if they are not, they should not be there.

● (1740)

I have been impressed with the ability of many people in the Post Office. If they were given the authority to deal with items at the local level, I think they could do so. Also, that chain of command has another effect. If something goes wrong, the minister or the deputy minister can put his finger on the responsible person. That person must hold that responsibility and rise up to it. If a change such as this was made, I believe we would see a tremendous improvement in our postal service almost overnight.

We should not expect the hon. minister to press a button and suddenly cure all the ills of the Post Office today. I