

*Labour Relations*

I would like, Mr. Speaker, to read again the motion presented by the hon. member for Kamouraska: on behalf of Social Credit Party of Canada:

That this House deplores the fact that the government has neglected to make legislative changes to remedy present problems at all levels of labour activity.

At the very start, Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with a present-day problem to show that it is not necessarily the government which, by legislative action, will solve the problems which exist within the trade union movement.

I want to deal briefly with the problem of the Post Office in Montreal where two unions are presently negotiating. The first, the Letter Carriers' Union, accepted by 82 per cent the minister's offers. Workers voted very democratically under the union's constitution across the country for the employer's offers. Nobody was heard to complain that the Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey) was anti-union.

There was also a problem in another union, the Postal Workers' Union, which started negotiations at the same time as the Letter Carriers' Union. No agreement has been reached yet on a single clause. Furthermore, they claim that the minister is against them, he who, after all, has made worthwhile offers accepted by 82 per cent of the letter carriers.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that the problem has nothing to do with the legislation, with the men who have to make the decisions. If we are a self-respecting society, it must also, with all the intermediaries involved, abide by the law, the gentlemen's agreements, the collective agreements signed for one, two or three years. I feel that the problem that exists, and I took the postal workers and the letter carriers as an example, in the final analysis, is a problem between individuals.

There are people, today, in the world of labour unions, who forget that one is a union member to work for the union movement and not to do politics or seek power. There is a notion, becoming ever more widespread amongst union leaders, that they are there, not necessarily to inform their members about their rightful claims, but merely to increase their membership and, as a result, their own personal power.

It is easy to find, in this day and age, people who like to imagine that, as president of a union that has 80,000 members across the land while the other fellow is president of 1,000 members, he has more power since he presides over 80,000 members.

Mr. Speaker, I have more respect for the president of a 1,000-member union, who sees to it that the collective agreement he signed is respected, who strives towards bettering the lot of the workers, who is completely concerned about the workers, instead of trying to trick or mislead them.

At the present time, an attempt is being made in Montreal, to bring the postal workers to reject negotiations that are being conducted in good faith by saying: We will not negotiate as long as those who have been suspended, or fired, are not reinstated.

How is it, Mr. Speaker, when those same people have agreed, for years, and within the scope of collective agreements, that a member who is not satisfied, an employee

[Mr. Olivier.]

who does not agree with the decision of his employer, who with good reason to do so, should decide to file a grievance, or to go to arbitration? How is it that today, those same people who have been asking for these clauses in the collective agreements for several years, do not recognize even the principle to say, if the minister made mistakes by dismissing or laying off people, we will go before a labour tribunal.

I think the Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey) made a very reasonable offer, which several leaders of local unions would have liked to hear from company presidents. Never in a hundred years did many company presidents refuse this formula. We have a Postmaster General who said: Okay, if you think my judgment is bad, if you think my representatives in Montreal made a bad judgment, if you think they made a bad decision, I am prepared to submit to arbitration the cases of the 18 or 20 persons who were dismissed or those of the 500 or 600 persons who were laid off for one or two days.

The minister said: We will go to arbitration if you want. How is it, Mr. Speaker, that these people reject the system which has served them for many years?

I think, Mr. Speaker, there are people at the head of the postal union in Montreal who are not there to lead their members astray or to help them. They are strictly there for political gain, I mean to play small petty politics within a union, to make a name for themselves and some day perhaps control a labour organization in Quebec. That is perhaps what the president of postal workers is trying to do in Montreal to the prejudice of the workers.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard hon. members in this House suggest that we should perhaps do away with the Rand formula. I do not agree entirely with that, because although some union presidents, Mr. Speaker, are somewhat dishonest in discharging their responsibilities, there are also corporation presidents and multinational companies that are unable to respect the people with whom they work, those people who earn them money during the whole year.

And I have in mind a situation I have been living for the past 17 months, a conflict at the United Aircraft, a company whose name no longer a profitable concern with the people, has been replaced by Pratt and Whitney. There are companies, Mr. Speaker, although their actions are perfectly legal on a moral standpoint they do not show the slightest respect for their employees.

Here is the president of a company who, after sober consideration, take the trouble to write to the federal Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, assuring him that, once the labour conflict at the United Aircraft is over, there will be a full expansion program and that he undertakes to re-hire everyone. We know what happened then. The Quebec Department of Labour asks for an investigation among those workers that are still on strike, and asks those the company is still interested in keeping to go back to work at United Aircraft. They are 976, out of a total of 2,600 at the beginning of the strike. After 16 months, 976 are left, saying: Yes, we want to go back to work for that company. From that, we must conclude that the company has won over the union, has managed to get everything it wanted and to crush the union as it wished