

*Government Organization*

co-operation between employer and employee, was a good thing. Ministers, particularly the Minister of Labour of the day, decided this did not need to be written into legislation, because there was no disagreement in respect of the particular proposition.

Going back to the family history of the Postmaster General, I know that particular family has been quite eloquent in developing new philosophies and new ideas. I am thinking of the Grand Canal project, which involves the diversion of the water system of a whole continent. These things have been thought out and developed almost entirely by one person.

● (3:00 p.m.)

I am surprised to see the Postmaster General doing exactly the same thing so far as the Post Office is concerned. He has sat down in his ivory tower with his background as an economist of some repute and has come up with a number of solutions to postal problems which have probably had a great degree of success. Certainly he is an economist in the academic sense, but his solutions would indicate a total detachment from the realities of practical politics and technology.

I suggest that the minister must consider the application of these solutions and changes in relation to the needs of people. It is very easy to develop a machine that will run eight hours a day because it only requires to be oiled once every eight hours. The human refueling cycle usually requires a break for dinner. The Postmaster General said that the employees could have a break at dinnertime but they could not go back to the Post Office and if they wanted to go back they had to do so on their own time.

This matter has been referred to the Public Service Staff Relations Board in order to arrive at a decision. In arriving at a decision consideration should be given to the people involved in the discussion. I have in mind the Postmaster General, his senior staff and the unions involved. The minister has not allowed this. He has arbitrarily decided that these changes shall be made come hell or high water.

It was very interesting to listen to the president of the Montreal postal employees on television. When he was asked whether a walkout would be legal or illegal he said there was no question but that it would be illegal. Such a walkout would be illegal in a technical sense. These employees have followed the only procedure open to them to

[Mr. Peters.]

arrive at a settlement of the dispute or a conclusion to the negotiations. They have followed their only course by referring the matter to the staff relations board. They have done so in respect of the wash-up question which was decided in favour of the employees. The department was instructed to undertake certain changes. What did the department do? It created another problem and neglected to implement the changes. What alternative is there left to the employees but to go on strike?

The minister made a number of increases in the cost of postage. This is a fundamental matter. It is interesting to note that there has been very little outcry about the increases in postal rates except from those who have been getting a bargain from the postal department. Whether the minister is right in his statement that if private non-profit organizations wish to put out a publication for the benefit of their members then the members should pay for it, I am not prepared to say. In order to do so I would have to know the total value of those publications to the national welfare, and I am not in a position to know this. But I am in a position to know that something is rotten in Denmark if we continue to make exceptions in respect of two United States publications at the expense of the Canadian public. I have had occasion to read both those publications and they contain United States propaganda first, last and always. They do have a small section for the Canadian reader but it is pretty limited so far as Canadian development is concerned.

What will defeat the government and the minister is not the increases in postal rates but the deterioration in the service being provided. There is something wrong with a system that now takes up to five days to move a letter from point A to point B when before the changes were made it took only 12 hours. I am not prepared to say this is the result of the stoppage of Saturday delivery, or because sorting should be done at two o'clock in the morning instead of at four o'clock. I know nothing about the Post Office operations, but I am inclined to think that the minister knows less.

I have had occasion to talk with experts in this field. The more they told me about what takes place in the Post Office the more confused I became. They tried in a few minutes to explain to me the sorting system and why an employee must pay for the cards he uses for sorting purposes. I find this a very complicated business which is not exactly the same in one place as it is in another.