

Postal Service Policies

He always had the freedom, and nobody ever took it away from him, to go where he wanted for lunch.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North criticized my lack of concern in the Lapalme situation, and from this sought to develop an anti-labour attitude on my part. At no time during the Lapalme dispute did the Post Office or its Postmaster General ever reflect a lack of concern for the employees of Lapalme. Well over one year ago, before this present dispute started, the Postmaster General offered to take them all into the Post Office, and the vast majority of them, 245 of some 397 employees, accepted this offer in March, 1969 within 24 hours. But it was their union that showed unconcern for its members. The union proved that it did not have the interests of the members at heart and that it thought its members should have the interests of the union at heart.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North also cited, as an example of my unconcern, the fact that I willingly saw *Le Travail* cease publication. Although he is a distinguished advocate of the labour position, and I applaud him for it most warmly, he apparently is not sufficiently aware of what is going on in labour circles in Quebec to know that the *Le Travail* is publishing, perhaps not in the same form and perhaps not as often, but it is publishing today. I do not think this reflects an anti-labour attitude any more than when I refused to accept the suggestion of his colleague, the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis), who suggested that the Postmaster General could impose a union on all the private contractors. The hon. member suggested that the way out of the difficulty posed by the fact that one of these contractors already had a union, The Teamsters, would be for the Postmaster General to advise the employer to set up a new corporation and take this new group into that new corporation, thereby denying his responsibility to the Teamsters. Mr. Speaker, I wonder who was anti-labour and who sounded like a corporation lawyer then?

I do not think I was anti-labour, either, when I refused to split the bargaining units in the Public Service and in the Post Office in order to accommodate the CNTU, or when I insisted that all those who entered the service of the Post Office as chauffeurs would have to join the existing bargaining units, those which are bargaining today on behalf of the employees of the Post Office. I do not think that was anti-labour. I do not think it reflects an anti-labour attitude when the Postmaster

[Mr. Kierans.]

General is concerned about avoiding the fat and the feather bedding that has crept in over the past century. The Lapalme dispute boils down to this. While the transitional cost may be \$1.5 million, the fact is that we shall be carrying the mail in Montreal with a trucking service employing approximately 257 drivers, instead of the 459 which the taxpayers of Canada were saddled with; so that while the transitional costs may be between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, the continuing savings in operations to the taxpayers of this country will be \$2 million a year. I do not think it is anti-labour to reflect this continuing concern, and I do not think I am criticizing my present colleagues in the Post Office when I say that the Post Office is a veritable gold mine if one wishes to look for ways of managing the department and administering the public purse the way it ought to be administered. I do not think I am being anti-labour if I suggest to the Ontario Regional Director that he might take a closer look at operations in Toronto which permit 30.1 per cent of all calls at red letter boxes in the city to be made at boxes containing not even a single letter.

Similarly, in this effort to slim down the Post Office, we have taken a look at Post Offices in the rural areas. The fact that so many of them can be closed down now is not so much a reflection of an avid, overwhelming desire to cut costs and services at any price as a reflection of the fact that communities have disappeared, that rural populations have moved to cities and that when we close down a post office in any community, we do so long after the doctor, the dentist, the banks and the schools have left. When we close down a post office we make sure that an alternative service is available.

Mr. Benjamin: A horse and buggy service.

Mr. Kierans: It is a service that is complete and satisfactory as soon as people realize and become accustomed to a simple little thing called change.

During the past 23 months many motions have been moved relating to the Post Office. It is quite evident that the Postmaster General must be guilty of something, and I guess I am guilty of something. And of what am I guilty? I think I am guilty of waking up the sleeping giant that was the Post Office. Not only was it a sleeping giant; it was a giant that was drugged.

An hon. Member: Don't be modest.