

*Postal Service Policies*

This Postmaster General made the unilateral decision to implement straight-through delivery of mail, prohibiting letter carriers from returning to the Post Office at lunch time, something they had done for a long while. The minister was warned that he could not do that unilaterally, that the Post Office was no longer a semi-military organization which had one motto "The mail must go through". The minister was told that since there were provisions for collective bargaining that could not be done. The minister laughed at us. He ignored us. Eventually, the employees exercised their right and requested arbitration.

I wish to put on the record a summary of what the arbitrator, Mr. W. S. Martin, a lawyer from Winnipeg, had to say about that dispute and how the Postmaster General got himself into that mess. I quote from a news report in the July 5, 1969 edition of the *Globe and Mail*:

The Post Office violated a collective agreement with the Council of Postal Unions by introducing straight-through delivery without proper consultation, chief adjudicator W. S. Martin has ruled.

—it would appear he has not got the authority to bring Twentieth-Century employer-employee concepts to an establishment which still adheres to the Nineteenth-Century master and servant precepts," he went on.

"However, more importantly, the spirit of the collective bargaining agreement has been misapplied and misinterpreted by the employer. The employer must not be permitted to engage in this type of conduct."

"However, such changes must not cause deterioration in the agreed terms and conditions of employment."

Mr. Martin suggested in his findings on straight-through delivery that the militancy, rigidity and hostility revealed in the attitudes and decision of the postal union may be a natural byproduct of the environment in which the employer has forced it to operate.

Management's conduct has created unrest, undermined morale and resulted in the development of hostility between the parties, he said.

That article refers to the two years this minister has held office. We had recently the terrible experience in Montreal. This minister and his department decided to wipe out the contract for mail pick-up held by Lapalme. I do not want to go into the details because it is a sad story, but may I put on the record one paragraph from the report of Mr. Carl Goldenberg who was appointed by this government to look into that particular dispute:

● (12:50 p.m.)

Although the Post Office was not their direct employer, its change of policy would directly affect [Mr. Orlikow.]

the livelihood of the Lapalme employees. The Post Office was therefore under a moral obligation to seek to protect their employment as far as possible.

I submit that until the Lapalme employees started to conduct slowdowns, the minister was completely unconcerned about them and their rights. This is another illustration of the unconcern of this minister for any kind of sensible, decent and honest relationship with his employees.

I could go on to say more about the Post Office Department but my time is limited. The minister has decided, and the government has agreed, that the Post Office should be operated not as a public service giving the kind of service that the people of Canada require, but should be operated in the black; that the postal rates should bring in enough money to pay for the cost of running the Post Office Department. As a result, the rates for non-profit journals have been increased 200, 300 and 400 per cent. Many of these journals have had to go out of business. Let me remind the minister that the journal of the CNTU, one of the best labour publications in Canada, has gone out of business in spite of the fact that some ministers of the government had a pretty close connection with the CNTU and ought to have had some appreciation of their problem. A large number of post offices in rural areas have been closed, to the great detriment of the residents of many parts of rural Canada. I have already referred to the mishandling of the situation relating to the Lapalme drivers.

I now come to the provocative, inflammatory and irresponsible statements made by the minister, not just in years gone by but during the last couple of weeks. The minister has talked glibly and publicly about automating the post office operations in the interest of greater efficiency. The employees of the Post Office Department would be stupid, would be less than human, if they were not to make the obvious assumption that automation will mean a reduced staff and large scale lay-offs.

When the postal employees and their unions made it clear that, unless there was a very specific guarantee by the government, the employees would, if necessary, go on strike rather than accept these lay-offs, the minister got cold feet. Then, the postal employees were treated to long lectures which, in effect, said to the employees: "Yes, we will have automation", and "Yes, we will have increased efficiency, but this will not mean lay-offs". In fact, only last Tuesday we were treated to the