

Montreal Postal Strike

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order.

Mr. Kierans: The Conservative government gave them everything they wanted.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. The hon. member for Sainte-Marie on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Valade: I will make my point of order in English because I do not want any ambiguity. I ask the minister, in view of his statements about violence and threats—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order.

Mr. Valade: That is my point of order.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): The hon. member asked the minister whether he could ask him a question and he is rising on a point of order.

I would like to know whether he is rising on a point of order or whether he wants to direct a question to the minister.

Mr. Georges Valade (Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker I rise on a point of order because in the course of his speech the minister mentioned threats and violence. He seems to be accusing all the employees involved in the strike. I feel he should be specific.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. That is not a point of order.

Mr. Kierans: I accept the hon. member's point. A small group of individuals—a gang—within the union is responsible for these things and leads everybody. The leader of the group called the Post Office the pork barrel of politics.

I asked him to be more explicit in his comments and his criticisms. If there is something in the garbage can, let him raise the cover.

That individual has even said that last year, between 7,000 and 8,000 parcels had been stolen during the Christmas season, and that he himself had engaged in this practice, as it was the common thing to do. Those are the undesirable ones!

[*English*]

For 14 years, Mr. Speaker, contracts have been given in Montreal without public tender. As I said in my letter to Mr. Parent, I am not blaming anyone—the management, the union or the government. I am simply stating the

[Mr. Valade.]

facts. I want to point out that the opposition must also share the blame. One newspaper article states that the mail situation in Montreal is a jungle. During the six years of Conservative government a tender was never asked for; they gave in on every occasion.

Mr. Valade: You did it for 25 years before that.

Mr. Kierans: Last year after Rod Services was no longer able to continue, they lost their employer.

Mr. Sulatycky: You realize they never had a strike either.

Mr. Kierans: You can buy your way out of anything, can't you? At that time I offered to make clear exactly how far I was willing to go. I offered to take into the department those drivers that we needed and to run the service in Montreal ourselves. I went further than that; I said that those employees whom we could not take into the department—because we did not need all 397 of them—would be offered part-time work until such time as we were able to hire them full time. If there were some left, we offered them the possibility—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kierans: —the possibility of retraining themselves so as to be able to fill other positions. This rather generous offer has been refused.

[*English*]

Why was it refused? It was refused for two reasons. The first reason was if they came into the department I could not recognize the CSN because we have our own unions in the public service. The second reason was that if we did take them, we could not give them recognition of their seniority. This was not because we would or would not have wanted to do that. I have no opinion on that matter; it is a union problem. What is quite clear is that the CSN is not interested in their members, but in themselves.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kierans: Last year they lost their employer and this year they are again losing their employer.

Mr. Valade: That is a misrepresentation of facts.

Mr. Kierans: He took a deliberate choice. He wanted no part of this. He took that choice despite the urging of the Post Office.