

"Either yes or no, and that is it"

The postal ultimatum: did they or didn't they?

(CUP) The Canadian Union of Postal Workers announced October 20 the calling of a national strike of inside postal workers because the government had issued "an ultimatum" and broke off negotiations.

Post-Master General Bryce Mackasey denied, however, that any ultimatum was made. "I should make this clear—that we did not issue an ultimatum," he told the House of Commons on October 23.

The following is an English verbatim transcript of an 11 p.m. October 20 telephone call between chief post office negotiator Ed Waddington and postal union negotiator Jean-Claude Parrot.

Did Waddington issue an ultimatum? And did Mackasey lie when he denied this in the House of Commons?

It's all on tape:

Mr. Waddington: Hello.

Mr. Parrot: Mr. Waddington?

Waddington: Yes.

Parrot: This is Jean-Claude Parrot.

Waddington: Yes, Jean-Claude.

Parrot: I have finally contacted some of my people.

Waddington: Yes.

Parrot: Finally, I think, we had agreed to meet at 9 a.m. and as far as the reply you have requested, a meeting is scheduled for 7:30 tomorrow morning with the National Executive Board and the Negotiating Committee especially so that we can be prepared to meet at 9 a.m.

Waddington: Oh, as I mentioned to Mr. Perreault, if we don't have an answer by 11 p.m., we will consider that the reply is negative and there will be no further meetings.

Parrot: But...

Waddington: I am very sorry, that is final.

VERY STRANGE

Parrot: But... This is very strange. You had given us your word that we would meet tomorrow at 9 a.m. and now you are telling us that this is final.

Waddington: Oh! well, sometimes things change, even if I mentioned 9, this means... things change from time to time. This is a very fluid situation.

Parrot: Yes, but listen, things change, it is quite true that things change but between that and giving us a few minutes to...

Waddington: We have been

discussing for months and months and months and we are not prepared to continue. Either it is yes, or it is no, or...

Parrot: Yes, but we have...

Waddington: The equivalent of no, and that is the end of it.

Parrot: Yes, but Mr. Waddington, we have explained to you tonight that besides the four points, there were the other points for which we received a mandate from our membership.

Waddington: We have a programme. We must not start discussing all the other points, no, that is not the way at all.

Parrot: Yes, but as far as we are concerned, in order to be in a position to...

THE FOUR POINTS

Waddington: Not the four points. Either yes or no, and that is it. Therefore, since you cannot give us a yes answer, we must assume that you've said no.

Parrot: But we want to negotiate.

Waddington: Go to the press people, all we have to do is exercise our rights it's as simple as that.

Mr. Parrot: Mr. Waddington, we want to negotiate, that is the question, negotiation is negotiation.

Waddington: Therefore, it is very simple, it is yes, or we take it that we don't meet any further.

Parrot: Yes, but that is an ultimatum, Mr. Waddington.

Waddington: That is an ultimatum, there is no doubt on that point, you said it.

Parrot: Yes but, listen, that is not the way to negotiate when we are faced with the possibility of a national strike.

Waddington: There is no doubt you can negotiate. Say yes, and then we will sit down after that.

Parrot: Yes, but, there will be no more negotiations after that, it will be over.

Waddington: No, it is not over. Those four points...

Parrot: Yes, but, that is all the wage question, it is not logical to place an ultimatum on the wage question in negotiations and then...

Waddington: In any event, it is...

Parrot: ...while there are extremely important clauses that still have to be negotiated.

Waddington: Tell the press what you want but that's it, if we don't

get a yes answer, it is over, no more meetings, I am sorry.

Mr. Parrot: Then, you won't be there at 9 tomorrow morning?

Waddington: No. Nobody else will be there either.

Parrot: No one else will be there either?

Waddington: That is right.

Parrot: Then, you are breaking off negotiations?

Waddington: Well, if you want to take it that way, that we are breaking off negotiations, you can do as you please, but it is very clear that we will not meet if we don't get a reply that... a yes reply. But we could, for example, consider a yes reply subject to discussion of all other points if you want to sign something to this effect tonight, if you want the assurance that all other points will be discussed.

Parrot: It is most unfortunate that while we are prepared to negotiate and even initial the counter-proposals you submitted to us yesterday, while we are prepared to initial clauses that appear in the Moisan report, and while we are prepared to negotiate the other points on which we are sure there could be a settlement, it is most surprising to be faced with such an ultimatum.

Waddington: Yes, but as I said, things change from time to time and that is the ultimatum. It is well understood and it is over, then. We did not get a yes answer from you and we won't meet anymore.

Parrot: Then, the meeting scheduled for 9 tomorrow morning... it's over, so...

Waddington: That is right.

Parrot: Then this is the Monday that ends it all, is that what you are telling us?

Waddington: I beg your pardon?

Parrot: Then you are deciding today to end everything?

Waddington: If (laughter) it is a bit on your side too. All you have to do is say yes and we will continue with the four points...

Parrot: We are prepared to...

Waddington: Except...

Parrot: We are prepared to negotiate.

Waddington: If you say yes on the four points, we are prepared to continue.

Parrot: That is not negotiation, Mr. Waddington.

Waddington: Otherwise, it is over, I am sorry.

Parrot: Well, what more can I say?

Waddington: I beg your pardon?

Parrot: What more can I add?

Waddington: Add what?

Parrot: That is what I am wondering, what can we add to all this?

Waddington: Well, if you aren't prepared to say yes, there is nothing to add. You are not ready then?

Parrot: Well, as I said to you,

we are meeting at 7:30 tomorrow morning...

Waddington: No, no, no, tonight, you are not prepared to say yes tonight?

Parrot: Well, we are not ready to say either yes or no tonight.

Waddington: Well, then, it is over, I am sorry. Give us a call when you are ready to say yes.

Parrot: Well, O.K.

Waddington: Goodbye.

Parrot: Goodbye.

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