

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's brevity, considering the fact that it is past ten o'clock. Perhaps we could ask search and rescue to find his document for him, but in this case I have the answer to his question, and I think it will alleviate his justified concern.

Canadian Forces administrative orders state that goods valued at \$50 and under may be declared verbally unless a customs official requests a written declaration.

Apparently in the past customs officials have been requesting written declarations from service personnel, but as a result of an interdepartmental inquiry the Department of National Revenue has agreed to process service personnel in the same manner as civilians.

● (2340)

The message referred to by the hon. member was issued from maritime command headquarters on June 23, 1977, and contravenes the Canadian Forces administrative order in so far that it "directs a requirement for written declarations" without qualification that goods valued at \$50 or less may be declared orally except when directed otherwise by a customs official.

Maritime command has been directed to clarify the instruction and to ensure that the procedures outlined in the Canadian Forces administrative order issued by National Defence headquarters are adhered to. Maritime command will change the message and will adhere to the Canadian Forces administrative order.

POST OFFICE—ALLEGATION UNION DENIED ACCESS TO MEANS
OF COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS—GOVERNMENT
POSITION

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, when I raised questions concerning the Post Office on July 4, the Postmaster General (Mr. Blais) answered that he had no idea of the reasoning behind the breakdown in negotiations and that his department had never interfered with the union in the carrying out of its duties.

I would like to refresh the minister's memory tonight in regard to that interference, and perhaps in that way he may be better able to understand the labour unrest which is current in the Post Office.

Perhaps I should start by reminding the Postmaster General of the case in Charlottetown, P.E.I., last April where a union steward was "counselled" and threatened with dismissal for submitting grievances. In other words, management threatened to fire him for doing his job.

Then there is the case in Sydney, Nova Scotia, of a Mr. J. Legge. Mr. Legge is the local CUPW president and he was ordered by postal authorities to remove union bulletins from the premises of post offices. These bulletins, Mr. Speaker, had already been initialled by the employer. But the employer changed its mind and ordered them removed to prevent communication in the union.

The cases get more serious. There is the case of Wayne Mundle, a union official from the Halifax area. On May 17 he tried to enter a post office on union business. At that time he was denied access to the building. When he asserted his right to be there as a representative of the union he was ejected from the building. The result of that was that assault charges have been laid against the post office official responsible.

But to make matters even worse, yesterday Wayne Mundle was suspended from his job for three months. The reason given was that he had no right to be in the building. In other words, the Post Office is suspending union officials from jobs in a post office for the crime of trying to work for the men and women they represent.

The Post Office made its attitude even more clear recently when its district director, W. L. Ryan, informed the regional director of the union, Mr. D. W. Tingley, that he would not entertain any correspondence with him and that he would not be allowed to enter postal installations in Nova Scotia. This means that Mr. Tingley will not be able to represent unionists in the matter of grievances or anything else. The government is flatly denying the right of the union to be represented by its elected officials.

This is surely in keeping with the Post Office Department's campaign of misinformation over the years. They have sent their senior employees kits calling certain CUPW officials marxists and separatists. They have sent conflicting bulletins to different parts of the country, and I have copies of these here.

It is small wonder that we have labour difficulties in the Post Office with the attitude and actions shown by the employer. In fact it is a wonder there is as much industrial peace as there is.

The government has had the opportunity to set matters right. It signed a contract last year which should have helped in the matter of technological change and casual employees. But it refused to honour the provisions of that contract, Mr. Speaker, and today in Toronto there are actually more casual or temporary employees than there were at the time the contract was signed.

The union wanted to reopen the bargaining early this year, in January 1977, as they had done in the past, to clear up some of these outstanding problems. The government would have nothing to do with an early bargaining. So now again we are faced with labour trouble in the Post Office, and again the government does nothing to clean up its own mess, choosing instead to propagandize and attack the union leadership. Mr. Speaker, there is one way in which the matter can be settled.

The union has called for a royal commission into the Post Office to find where the problems lie. If the government is so confident the union is to blame, why will it not hold such a commission and give an undertaking that it will carry out its recommendations? Is it afraid that a royal commission will take the road of all past independent commissions and blame the way the Post Office has been managed, or mismanaged