

July 29 1972

Post office deals with a rival

By DAVID BAINES

Tribune Staff Writer

A one-man mail delivery firm, although it promised its customers impartial 48-hour service, soon discovered the letter of the law takes priority over all others.

Bruce Lobay, 22, of 410 Washington Ave., learned that even a personal delivery service requires a stamp of approval, and the post office — a strict monopoly — wasn't about to give him one.

Mr. Lobay started his postal service July 1 using a small motor scooter to deliver the letters, and his home as postal headquarters. He offered quick service and charged only seven cents a letter, one cent less than the post office.

He developed a large clientele and was soon handling about 500 letters a day. His overhead — gas for his scooter — was only 30 cents a day, and his profit more than \$40 a day.

A suburban weekly newspaper wrote the success story, and a radio show moderator interviewed him to demonstrate that any young person could get a job, if he wanted one badly enough.

Postal authorities were so impressed that they paid him a visit July 21 and advised him to go out of business.

"We made him aware there is a Post Office Act and the postmaster general has a monopoly on letter mail," a post office spokesman said Friday.

Under the act, the post office has the sole and exclusive privilege of "conveying, receiving, collecting, sending, and delivering letters" within Canada.

The spokesman said if the post office permitted the operation of numerous small delivery services, there would soon be fragmentation and inefficiency. He said the post office is responsible to its employees and private business-



Bruce Lobay aboard scooter he uses for delivery.

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Mail service

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es like Mr. Lobay's would jeopardize their jobs.

"Mr. Lobay was able to undercut the post office service charges because he was a one-man outfit. But if he hired another man and started delivering outside Winnipeg, he would soon find his profits decreasing," he said.

Anybody who tries to set himself up in competition with the post office is subject to a fine not exceeding \$100 for every day he remains in business, or two months imprisonment or both. But postal authorities say they have no intention of charging Mr. Lobay.

"I was a bit apprehensive all along that something wasn't right. It was paying so well for so little effort," Mr. Lobay said.

"But I wasn't aware I was breaking the law. I thought anything without a stamp on it was legitimate, that people could deliver their mail however they wanted. I knew there were messenger services for parcels and so I thought it would be all right for letters, too," he said.

Mr. Lobay said he took two years of chemical technology at Red River Community College, and a year of pharmacy at the University of Manitoba. He was employed as a research assistant chemist for the department of botany at the University of Manitoba from December to June 1.

"I knew the job was going to end then, and so I applied to Canada Manpower in April. I didn't even get a lead. The idea of a mail delivery service came to me and I started contacting merchants in June and got the thing rolling by the beginning of July.

"Business was so good that when the two post office investigators came to see me, the phone was constantly ringing with new business," he laughed.

The post office monopoly on mail delivery does not extend to flyers and printed advertising material, and exceptions are made for "casual" delivery of letters outside the postal system, the post office spokesman said.

Mr. Lobay is now operating his business on this basis, but working within the law isn't proving quite as lucrative.

"The act is an infringement on free enterprise. It doesn't

seem fair. If my service is wanted and if I do a good job, then I don't see why I shouldn't be allowed to continue.

"I'm only making about \$20 a day now," he added.

The Rural Municipality of East St. Paul

NOTICE

The written reports of the auditor for the year ended 31st December, 1971, together with the related financial statements, have been deposited in the Municipal Office, Bird's Hill, and are available for inspection by any person or his agent, at all reasonable hours, and any person or his agent, at his own expense, may make a copy thereof or extracts therefrom.

Dated at Bird's Hill, Manitoba, this 26th day of July 1972.

Amy A. Gorham
Secretary-Treasurer

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Let 'Em Put Me In Jail: Private Postie

Bruce Lobay, a 22-year-old Winnipeg man who found out Thursday he couldn't legally compete against the Canadian post office, says he'll continue to operate anyhow.

"It's an infringement on my rights as a Canadian," he said Friday after being informed that the post office has a monopoly on mail delivery in Canada. "I was doing something beneficial for the people and was hurting no one."

Three weeks ago, Mr. Lobay set up his own postal service in East Kildonan. Using a motorcycle to make

his rounds, he guaranteed customers same-day local delivery for seven cents a letter, one cent cheaper than the post office rate.

His activities were explained in a weekly newspaper, and post office officials promptly informed him of the Post Office Act, which gives the postmaster-general a monopoly on letter mail.

Anyone breaking the law is subject to a fine not exceeding \$100 for every day he remains in business, two months imprisonment, or both.

"I was unemployed for three months, and the unemployment people couldn't even find me a lead. I wasn't collecting unemployment (benefits), so I finally told them, 'Fine, leave me alone and I'll find my own job.'

"I needed the money . . . I didn't want to sit around and grow a beard. I just wanted to work.

"But now that I've finally got myself a job, they won't let me do it. What am I supposed to do, go on welfare?"

He said he would continue delivering the mail. "Let them put me in jail."

Mr. Lobay explained his service was only for the summer and would last only "another month or so. In September most of the students go back to school and then I'll seriously look for a job."

He said he will deliver third-class mail — which is legal — and also letters if asked to do so.

A former chemistry student at Red River Community College, Mr. Lobay worked on a winter works

job at the University of Manitoba which ended in early June.

"I knew that job would end in June so I started making plans on what I would do afterwards. I organized this delivery service and got it going.

"I get about 170 miles to the gallon on my scooter, and on a good day I can make \$35."

And besides, he said "everyone loves the service and they're not too happy with the post office service."

April 29 1977

Private letter service ends

Lobay hangs up mail bag

By GEORGE JACUB

Tribune Staff Writer

Bruce Lobay, the 22-year-old entrepreneur whose one-man postal service drew the ire of post office authorities last week, has gone out of business — he is unemployed again and looking for work.

Mr. Lobay voluntarily folded his letter-carrying operation after being told in no uncertain terms by the post office that what he was doing was illegal.

Even if he had not done so, Mr. Lobay said in an interview, his customers had informed him that because they did not want him to get into trouble they would no longer use his service.

Mr. Lobay expressed no bitterness at what happened.

"I'm grateful I wasn't prosecuted," he said.

Looking to the future, he said he plans to deliver school notices telling students what classrooms to report to in September. He already has an agreement to do this for Milles Macdonell Collegiate — he did it last year and this gave him the idea for his mail delivery service. He said he will try to extend this service to two other local colleges.

This job is only for a couple of weeks, however, and it won't begin until the last week in August.

For that reason, Mr. Lobay is looking for a permanent job.

He went to Manpower Tuesday and to the Post Office Monday (to apply for

an inside job, not as a letter carrier; he was told they did not make "special cases.")

He applied at a large suburban department store. He found his notoriety had preceded him and he was told "We were wondering if you were coming in."

Mr. Lobay has, however, received two calls from private business expressing an interest in meeting him. There have been no firm job offers yet.

Mr. Lobay expressed mild surprise at a media coverage his story received. He was a bit disconcerted to find himself labelled a "radical letter-carrier" in a Thunder Bay newspaper headline, and wondered why his tale ranked equal coverage with the "major news stories such as Vietnam."