

Oral Questions

to say... The question is simple: Will the Government give Canada Post the flexibility it needs to continue negotiations and have some hope of reaching a settlement? That is the kind of action we expect from this Government. Nothing else will work.

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, again the question is based on the totally false premise that the Government is somehow initiating the strike, or the Government is somehow involved.

Mr. Gauthier: You sure as heck are. Exactly.

Mr. Andre: The Hon. Member was here in 1981 when the Canada Post Corporation was created. He knows that right into Bill was incorporated the mandate that it should operate in a fiscally sound, break-even manner.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): In 1990.

Mr. Andre: He knows that this House has provided in that mandate for collective bargaining which can lead to strikes. He knows that what is happening is perfectly legal and understandable. The economic stakes have been raised by both sides. Is he now asking for this House to overturn the decision taken in 1981—

Mr. Gauthier: No, Sir!

Mr. Andre: —and legislate an end to strikes in Canada Post? If so I think it would be useful. The House would benefit from that position on behalf of the Liberal Party, if that is the Hon. Member's position.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): We told you what to do.

SECURITY CHECKS FOR CASUAL EMPLOYEES

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Post Office. I am sure he is aware from newscasts this morning that the Post Office is hiring casuals to deliver the mail without proper security checks. They are given keys to apartment blocks and they are handling family allowance and pension cheques. Will the Minister take a hand in this situation and make sure that there are some limits here, that the security of the mail will be respected while these work stoppages are going on?

• (1440)

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, when I heard those reports I inquired of the Post Office. I was informed that the procedure being followed in regard to replacement workers is exactly the same—

Mr. Murphy: Off the streets!

Mr. Andre: —as in regard to regular carriers—

Ms. Copps: That is false, completely false!

Mr. Andre: If the New Democratic Party would allow me to answer, as well as the vice-president of the students union over there, I will.

A reliability check is undertaken on all employees following their hiring. That reliability check is being undertaken in terms of replacement workers as well. If any workers fail to pass the test, so to speak, they will be dismissed immediately.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister for his assurance that the Post Office is following those regulations. I hope that if evidence turns up that, in fact, they are not, he will take action on his commitment here in the House today.

My question relates to the conciliator's report—

Ms. Copps: Scabs are okay, eh?

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, if I could have some order in this place—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has called on the Chair for assistance. The Chair, without naming the Hon. Member, will ask her for her assistance, too.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

CORPORATION'S DEADLINE TO ATTAIN FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the Minister responsible for the Post Office is this. The conciliator's report acknowledged that the kind of policy framework that the Government puts in place for the negotiations has an impact on those negotiations.

Is the Minister prepared now to reconsider the deadline that he has put out for financial self-sufficiency by next spring in light of the fact that considerable progress has been made with regard to deficit reduction? As long as the trend line of deficit reduction is downward, will he not give the Post Office some elbow-room so that it can negotiate in a real sense? In this way there can be some give and take at the bargaining table and we can get the postal workers back to work and avoid a national strike.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, first, I point out that in addition to stating in the legislation of 1981 that the Post Office should break even within two years, that deadline was postponed until 1984-85. It was postponed again by our Government to 1985-86. It was postponed again to 1987-88. How many postponements are necessary before it becomes ridiculous?

The important point is that it is not the restrictions of the corporate plan which are causing the difficulties. The Hon. Member knows that it is not on financial matters that the