

Postal Strike

National Revenue votes 1a and 5a
 Parliament vote 5a
 Privy Council votes 1a, 5a and 15a
 Science and Technology votes 5a, 10a and 25a
 Secretary of State votes 1a, 5a, 10a, 15a, 20a, 25a, 40a, 62a, 65a, 75a, L80a, 90a, 100a, L105a and 115a
 Supply and Services votes 1a, L10a, 15a and 20a
 Treasury Board votes 5a and 10a

Mr. Speaker: The House has heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Motion agreed to.

MOTION TO ADJOURN UNDER S.O. 26

[English]

POST OFFICE**REQUESTED DEBATE ON POSTAL STRIKE**

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 26, I ask leave to make a motion for the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration. This specific and important matter is the postal work stoppage which has continued for the past three weeks and is still unresolved in spite of the best efforts of the Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey) and in spite of assurances of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that—

At some time the right of free collective bargaining has to give way to intervention by parliament when we judge that the public disservice caused by a strike outweighs the freedom of the right to strike itself.

The absence of this essential service is creating accumulating hardship for all Canadians, but particularly for those who receive their incomes and revenues by mail, those whose jobs have been terminated because of disruptions in trade and commerce, and those who have lost their livelihood as a direct result of this stoppage; for example, the letter carriers. It has also ended the exchange of mail with other countries, a serious consequence of which is the present and potentially permanent loss of foreign trade.

If acceptable, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker):

That this House do now adjourn.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 26, the hon. member has given the Chair notice of his intention to seek consent of the House to set aside a special time to debate the motion that the House do now adjourn for the purpose of discussing a specific and urgent matter, namely, that of the effect of the postal strike.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Motions of this sort respecting work stoppages in the country, particularly work stoppages in the public service—especially work stoppages in the public service that have gone on as this one has, for some three weeks—always cause great difficulty for the Chair. There are one or two contradictions which I am sure all hon. members will understand, the first being that since it has been the expressed will of parliament to give to workers in the public service rights that are akin to collective bargaining rights in the private sector, and therefore to include the right to strike, an immediate contradiction is posed if as soon as that right is pursued parliament is asked to consider it as an emergency.

The fact that the right to strike exists presupposes that when a strike in the public service is going to take place it will cause inconvenience of major proportions. Since that is anticipated, it is very difficult to say immediately that the exercise of the right to strike constitutes an emergency within the terms of Standing Order 26.

On the other hand, there is the contradiction that if Standing Order 26 exists for any purpose at all in order to move the House into a special session, surely a three weeks' strike in the postal service must be something which ideally comes within the four corners of that Standing Order, otherwise the Standing Order would not make sense.

The Chair, of course, must wrestle with these two contradictions every time a motion such as this is put in this kind of situation. There can be no question that the effect on the public that is described with respect to the proposed motion is very clear. It is, in fact, always a matter of critical importance when disruption of a national service of the nature of the postal service takes place. On the other hand, the language of Standing Order 26 makes it clear that if there is another reasonable opportunity afforded to hon. members of the House to discuss the matter, then Standing Order 26 ought not to be resorted to.

● (1510)

The fact is that, in the first place, not only today, which is obvious, but almost every day since the postal strike began or since the conflict between the postal negotiations and the wage and price legislation which is before the House began, this subject has formed a substantial part of the question period every day. I recognize that that tends to argue for both sides of the question. On the one hand, it argues that since there is the opportunity to use the question period, which has been taken advantage of, an emergency debate is not necessary; while at the same time it says that since the subject occupies half the question period every day, it is obviously a matter of importance which tends to come within the four corners of Standing Order 26. The fact of the matter is that the longer I go on with this reasoning, the further I get from a conclusion: I realize that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!