

*Supply*

taking. It is trying to take the approach that one party is to blame. That is not realistic. It does not fit with human experience.

● (1230)

Let me give another example, Mr. Speaker. When we are talking about labour-management relations and service at the Post Office—and obviously to provide service we need successful labour-management relations—we are talking about making a deal. Usually a deal is between two Parties, but in this case there are three Parties because the Government is directly involved. What is a deal? It is the result of give and take. It is not the result of one party giving in and the other party taking, because you cannot make a deal that way.

Let us look at the most recent deal with which Canadians are familiar, namely, the Meech Lake Accord. That is a deal. We can criticize it, we can say it is inadequate or it is great, but fundamentally it is a deal. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) wanted to bring Quebec into the Constitution. Quebec had its five demands. Other provinces had different demands. There was give and take.

If we are to have continued service at the Post Office we have to bring about a negotiated settlement. We have to have a deal, which means give and take. What the Government is saying up to now is take, take, take, that the only one to blame for the lack of service at the Post Office is the unions. That is what the Government is saying in the present context. Is it any surprise that the unions feel they have their backs up against a wall?

Management at the Post Office is asking for the elimination of the cost of living clause, which is a normal part of most collective agreements these days. The cost of living is going up, but if the Government is successful in its economic policy presumably inflation will not rise at an exorbitant rate so this clause will have no impact.

The Government is asking for the elimination of 8,700 jobs. If you were working in a situation in which 8,700 jobs would be cut from your workplace, Mr. Speaker, I am sure you would feel insecure, just as I am sure most Canadians in a situation like that would feel insecure, and can understand why people are asking for job security. So it is not surprising that unions feel they have their backs up against the wall. It is necessary for us to have a negotiated settlement in this area for service to continue. Just blaming one of the three key parties involved will not bring us the solution that we need. Nor will it assure continued service.

It surprised me to learn that the Government was using a part-time conciliator in the negotiations between the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Government. The Government had appointed someone who had no time available on his calendar until October and could only make time available when other items were cancelled. Is that a serious approach to important negotiations? The Government should have appointed someone who was available full time, the best

conciliator available in the country, because these negotiations are crucial to Canadians.

Let us now look at this situation in a broader perspective, the perspective of Government—Post Office policy. What choices do we face with regard to Post Office policy? Do we go with the Conservative Post Office policy or do we continue with the drift established under previous Liberal and Conservative Governments, a drift that has got us nowhere, or are there other alternatives?

First, what is the Progressive Conservative policy? It is to put the priority on eliminating the Post Office deficit and consequently cut service. While the Government is seeking to eliminate the deficit it is preventing the Post Office from getting involved in revenue generating areas. Not only is the Government seeking to eliminate public subsidy of the Post Office, it is also seeking to eliminate the possibility of cross-subsidization, which is another way of paying for the service. The Government has put the priority on deficit cutting rather than on service.

The Government has substituted mailboxes for home delivery. The Government is treating Canadians in suburban locations as second-class citizens. We heard the Minister justify this today by saying that the Americans have done it first. We know that the Prime Minister is an admirer of Ronald Reagan, but surely we do not have to follow, lock, stock and barrel, what the Americans do.

With regard to rural service, the Government has over the last few years been cutting back on rural routes and it has been closing post offices. There has been no firm indication up until now that the Government is willing to change its policy regarding rural Canada. This whole question of reduced service has spawned an organized protest movement throughout rural Canada, demanding that the Government cease to be a threat to rural life. It is time that the Government woke up and took rural service seriously.

The Government, to reduce service in the rural area, is following a policy of privatization, a policy it is following in the urban areas as well. Customer services are being turned over to the private sector. The Minister said that you can get more convenient hours that way. Then why not change the hours of the existing post offices if that is the key? In the process of franchising post office outlets, what the Post Office and the Government is doing is giving away revenues. The only post offices that you can franchise are those making money. No one will want to take on a franchise for a post office if it is losing money. The ones that you can franchise are those presently making a profit. Revenues will be given away which will further starve the Post Office, aggravating the deficit situation. Along with that will be a continued policy of service reduction at the Post Office.

Another area of policy which the Government has made clear by its actions rather than its words is in the whole area of on-time delivery. How fast do you get your mail? We see letters take a week to go across town or a couple of weeks