

Oral Questions

precedent in Canadian history where individuals in the private sector had access to this kind of draft?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this is precisely the question that was dealt with by the Chair.

Mr. Broadbent: No, it isn't.

Mr. Mulroney: Indeed, it was. In his response the Speaker said that, in regard to the question of propriety, it is a matter of political debate.

Mr. Broadbent: That is what it is.

Mr. Mulroney: As a matter of political debate you can have your opinion and I can have mine, and I disagree with you.

Mr. Broadbent: What an answer.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION

LETTER CARRIERS' STRIKE

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. The Government has consistently denied the role that it has played in bringing about the postal strike. However, a certain Harold Dunstan, General Manager of Labour Relations for Canada Post, sees it differently. He said this morning, and I quote:

The agency is still looking for the flexibility it needs to implement a sweeping restraint program ordered by the Conservative Government.

He also said he is getting fed up with the unions' refusal to accept at least some of the concessions the agency needs to wipe out Post Office deficits by next March as the Government wants.

● (1450)

Will the Prime Minister recognize now that his Government has in fact caused the strike? And will he do the proper thing, which is to remove the handcuffs and shackles the Government has imposed on Canada Post and allow it to make reasonable offers which would bring the strike and the violence to an end? This is what we want to know.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, when the Crown corporation was created in 1981, it stated right in the Bill the object was for it to operate on a fiscally break-even basis. The then Government set that for 1982-83. It was extended to 1984-85. Our Government extended it to 1985-86 and then there was an extension to 1987-88. The fact is there have been a lot of extensions to that corporate plan, but more fundamental is the question of whether these negotiations, as they are going on, are restrained by the fiscal or corporate plan or whether in fact it is a matter of the usual kinds of conflicts one sees in many collective

bargaining situations in the search for power between the union and management. We have here, in my view, that normal situation.

The corporation made an offer at ten o'clock this morning, or at noon. There has been an indication by the union that it will make a counter offer this evening. The process is proceeding as envisaged by the collective bargaining process. I think that we should let that proceed and ought not to interfere in those talks by continually raising these issues on the floor of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, the Minister says the situation is normal, while television has shown us some incredibly violent scenes where people got hurt. I suppose someone will have to die before the Government decides to intervene.

Is the Government going to wait until the social climate further deteriorates in this country before it takes the only reasonable action it should take, which is to take away the constraints it has imposed on Canada Post—constraints the Corporation admits do exist—and let the Corporation make reasonable offers and thus put an end to a dispute that is getting dangerous, that may lead more violence and even totally paralyse our postal services?

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Hon. Member. There is no place for violence. I have asked Canada Post and, indeed, before I made the request, it had already instructed its managers across the country to avoid situations which have the potential for violence. I hope Mr. McGarry, if he has not yet, will ask his members to avoid violence and I hope we in this Chamber will all counsel that violence be avoided. It is unnecessary.

As I just indicated, negotiations are going on as envisaged by normal collective bargaining. An offer has been made and there is an indication that a counter offer will be made. The Hon. Member is not serving the process well, or the country, by implying that in fact all the blame is on one side and there are distortions in the process.

Mr. Gauthier: It's on your side.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): It's the government strike breakers.

Mr. Andre: The Hon. Member may consider that to his partisan advantage but—

Mr. Speaker: Order.