

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

escalating the difficulties on the picket-lines and, in fact, will involve an increase in violence as we saw over the weekend.

The Government cannot then claim this morning that increasing violence must lead to back-to-work legislation when the fact is that back-to-work legislation has created the violence on the picket-line. The Government introduced this legislation knowing this would happen because it wanted to break the back of the union once and for all. How the Minister can stand here in the House—Madam Speaker, there does not appear to be a quorum in the House.

• (1250)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): There is quorum now. The Hon. Member has the floor.

Ms. Copps: I heard a government Member saying that the Members wanted to hide behind the curtains because they could then adjust the volume. I would like to remind Hon. Members that the volume they will have to deal with is the volume of complaints from constituents who will see through this facade, this feigned national emergency which was created by the Government, aided and abetted by Canada Post. This Government is out to break the backs of working people. I find it passing strange that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) who claims to be the great negotiator stands back and says nothing while he permits his Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) to introduce a piece of legislation that is so Draconian in its influence that it is possibly a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Of course the Government does not care about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it does not believe that individuals should have access to a Charter of Rights to protect them. That is clear from the contents of this piece of legislation. Any thinking person in Canada who reviews this Bill will realize that the prohibition laid down, including fines of up to \$50,000 against individuals and up to \$100,000 against unions for not abiding by the terms of the legislation, is heinous enough in itself, but on top of these very onerous fines the Government is suggesting that if any person for any reason does not comply with the contents of the Bill, he or she will be forced, potentially, out of his or her job for a period of up to five years.

If I were the president of my local and in that capacity did not respect the prohibition against picketing or did not come back to work on the first day I was ordered to, I could lose my job for up to five years. Canadians believe that that is bad and is wrong. I think it is very sad that the Government has attempted to create a climate of violence in an effort to justify to Canadians what is really a very onerous and Draconian piece of legislation.

I am not surprised that we heard the Minister responsible for Canada Post here this morning negotiating the contract on the floor of the House of Commons by suggesting that the union had made excessive demands.

Let us look at the demands, Madam Speaker. Everybody knows that the union involved is not the most popular union in Canada but at the same time it has been quite responsible in the issues it has raised for the attention of the public and for the attention of Canada Post, namely, the issues of franchising and part-time workers.

We recall quite vividly the Prime Minister making a promise before all people in Canada that he was going to deal with the issue of part-time workers, who are primarily women. The union in this case has shown the lead with respect to the treatment of part-time workers. Part-time workers under the collective agreement are protected. They do have access in many respects to similar kinds of benefits that might be available to full-time workers. The union would like to improve that situation for part-time workers.

Instead we have the company, aided and abetted by the Government, which does not want to deal with the question of part-time workers, even though the Prime Minister himself promised that resolving the difficulties facing mostly women, who are working part time—many of whom would like to work full time but jobs are not available—would be a number one priority of the Government. Yet when the opportunity was presented to deal with it in the context of these negotiations, the Government turned its back on the working people.

The Government is asking the opposition Parties to pass a piece of legislation expeditiously which succeeds in discriminating against women and violating potentially the Charter of Rights and Freedoms by denying a worker the right to work for up to five years, if he or she is responsible for an infringement under this Bill. This legislation levies fines of up to \$50,000 or \$100,000 for individuals and/or unions which might be involved in violations, and the Government is coming down hard because it is trying to create a climate of violence in which it can be justified in breaking the back of the union, in the same way that Ronald Reagan made breaking unions a hallmark of his administration in the United States.

It is shameful for a Prime Minister who claims to be a negotiator, and allegedly built a reputation on his abilities to bring the parties together, to stand silently by while his Minister of Labour and his Minister responsible for Canada Post, siding only with the company in not agreeing to the union's demand for a mediator, are trying to create a situation where violence is likely to occur.

As a Member, I will not take the rap the Government will try to lay on us in Opposition, that it is our fault because we do not move quickly with the legislation. The Government moved first by claiming the possibility of back-to-work legislation as early as October 3. The Minister of Labour had already set the stage. The company had no need to negotiate in good faith because it knew the Government would move in with a heavy hand.

Up until the Government moved in with the back-to-work legislation, according to the company's own spokesman, the mail was moving and there was no problem. Canada Post was