

Summer Recess

of his leadership of his party that he has to give in to the ill-founded and ill-advised pressure of this particular group.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Regan: This year his job is in jeopardy. I happen to be one who believes his job should not be in jeopardy. I have a very high regard—

Some hon. Members: We want Joe.

Mr. Regan: I am serious. I have a high regard for the right hon. gentleman, but there are more leaks from his caucus than there is in a sieve. Everyone around here and most of the people across the country know his job is in jeopardy. He therefore makes the human, but highly regrettable, error of being led into a position, reactionary in nature, which is harmful to the parliamentary process, destructive to the collective bargaining process and, indeed, one which inevitably will have the effect of prolonging the strike because it will prolong the expectations of the parties that a legislated settlement may let them off the hook and may put them back to work. But that is not going to happen.

Mr. Malone: Your speech writer drinks too much.

Mr. Regan: There is no speech writer in the world who writes in a hand like this, my friend.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Regan: The Leader of the Opposition is interfering in the process of attempting to achieve a settlement. This affects postal service for all of the people of the country and the working conditions and salary levels of a great number of workers across the country. It is not the role of Parliament to interfere with the settlement of this strike. A taxi driver drove me here this morning, and he said exactly that. He said, "Why is Mr. Clark messing around with this thing? Why does he not let the parties get on with negotiations?"

Mr. Beatty: That was Peter Stollery, was it?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: What have you got against taxi drivers?

Mr. Regan: They are against taxi drivers. Or maybe they are against senators. It is one or the other.

Mr. Huntington: Was he driving an Austin?

Mr. Regan: I can understand why hon. members opposite want to distract me from my main purpose, because they are hurting. However, I say seriously that the Leader of the Opposition is serving the main purpose of satisfying his backbenchers instead of following his better judgment, and he is harming Canadians as a whole.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Regan: His solution of passing legislation to end the strike can thwart the achievement of a fairly bargained settlement.

What has been the story when there has been legislation passed—and it had to be done—to end strikes in the past? It has left a residue of bitterness. It has not made for better relations. Sometimes it has to occur, as I said. I was going to use the example earlier of the fact that Allan Blakeney, as Premier of Saskatchewan, was faced with a hydro workers strike in the middle of a blizzard in February, and even he had no choice but to legislate them back to work. Those situations can arise. But when those situations do arise, as unfortunate as they are, there is no question that legislation does leave that residue of bitterness. It is not the foundation for building better industrial relations between parties.

The small businessmen of this country with whom I have talked are condemning the Leader of the Opposition for the position he is taking. Let us make no mistake about that. Some hon. members opposite know that because they have been hearing it, even though the mail is not pouring in because of the strike. They have been hearing it in other ways, and they know that what small business in this country is saying is that it is extremely unfortunate and painful to them and that the strike is costing them a lot of money. But they fear that a legislated settlement will breed more strikes each time the collective agreement comes up for renewal. If one side declares a strike or the other side allows a strike to occur and if the parties find that no one will legislate them back after seven or ten days and they must work out their differences rather than face a quick, convenient legislated settlement, then strikes will not be as likely to occur next time and in succeeding years.

The small businessmen I know in this country are taking the position that this strike should be fought out by the parties. Let them reach an agreement as best they can at the table with the help of good mediators, and let us not have Parliament interfering in that process. They believe that if this process is followed rather than the legislative process, we are much more likely to have the foundation for better industrial relations in the Post Office as it becomes a Crown corporation and in the years ahead than otherwise.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Regan: I want to summarize four or five points. First, in my view, by keeping Parliament sitting for this sole purpose, the Leader of the Opposition is showing no confidence in Judge Alan Gold. He is undermining him, and Judge Alan Gold has an enviable record as a mediator.

Second, the Leader of the Opposition is prolonging the strike by allowing the parties to believe that they may get a legislated settlement.

Third, the Leader of the Opposition is setting an undesirable precedent which could lead to more of the same in the future. If hon. members in the opposition keep Parliament sitting because there happens to be a strike in the Post Office, in the future they may find that they will have to keep Parliament