

Government Orders

Having said that, the government has an overriding responsibility to the Canadian public to bring this lengthy dispute to a fair and equitable resolution without further delay.

This legislation ought to be seen as a mechanism which would not only ensure the continuation of postal services but would also allow the parties to conclude this chapter and build on the progress they have made toward an improve relationship.

I would therefore urge all members of this House to support this legislation.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Before I recognize the Official Opposition critic, I would like to recall, in response to the question about seconding motions, the following citation from Beauchesne's Sixth Edition, paragraph 465(2), and I quote:

(2) While a Government Order must be moved by a Minister, it may be seconded by any Member of the House.

That being said, debate is resumed. The hon. member for Kenora—Rainy River.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, before I get into the substance of the bill and the discussion at hand, I want first of all to say to the minister and the government opposite something about this situation of giving the opposition the bill ten minutes before we are to stand up in the House to speak. If we look at this particular piece of legislation clause by clause, it is not exactly something that is standard in the sense of what we have seen in previous back-to-work legislation. We should have been given a chance to look at this piece of legislation last Friday or in fact first thing this morning.

• (1230)

As a matter of fact I did call the minister's office on a couple of occasions and suggested that they send this legislation over embargoed so that we could, as opposition members, take a look at it and speak to it clearly.

It is a very dangerous precedent, Mr. Speaker, that this place, and indeed yourself would allow this kind of situation to take place. In essence we have not even had time to read this bill line by line and clause by clause because of the shortness of time given to us to reflect on just what the words say and mean as far as the back-to-work legislation is concerned.

I thought it would be important to mention that because again I have not had an opportunity to look at this proposed legislation in its entirety. I am assuming from what the minister has said that this is to a certain extent an ordinary kind of back-to-work legislation and that there is no clause in the bill that may hit me across the forehead somewhere down the line when I realize it is not of a standard nature.

I must admit that I have spent in this particular seat here in this place a great amount of time speaking on back-to-work legislation. I believe this is the third time in the last two months that I have had the opportunity to talk to ministers' back-to-work legislation. It kind of makes you wonder how the minister can stand in his place and suggest that the collective bargaining process is working very efficiently and effectively if I have to stand here and debate with him whether back-to-work legislation is a necessity, is a good idea, and in essence maintains the credibility of the collective bargaining process.

I for one am very worried about the precedent we are continuing to set in this place. The moment a particular labour group or management group feels the necessity to either strike or in the case of management lock someone out, we in this place have to get involved in the collective bargaining process and bring in back-to-work legislation.

The process of back-to-work legislation is obviously there when and if necessary in extreme situations. Here we have a piece of legislation called Bill C-40 which is presented today without a strike or a lock-out taking place as we speak. It is very unique in the Canadian labour movement to see a government bring in legislation before we see whether the two sides can continue to look towards a resolution, before both sides officially come out and say to the country and to the world: we cannot come to an agreement; we are going to lock out or go on strike. Therefore, the government obviously has the option of suggesting that we cannot afford to have that kind of scenario in this country and therefore we will bring in back-to-work legislation.

This is not back-to-work legislation. This is essential service legislation brought in through the back door. That is basically what this says, that we consider Canada Post an essential service and therefore we will put in place legislation of this nature to make sure that there is no strike in case the union decides to go on strike, or in case the postal corporation decides to lock them out.