

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

courts. I do not think we should take that risk, and that is why I want it removed.

Clearly there is no penalty for an employer or an employer representative who does not call wicket clerks back to work for eight o'clock the morning after the Bill is passed. The Bill is supposed to come into effect 12 hours after the Royal Assent. However, if a local manager or supervisor decides that he will not bring back those people until a day after, meaning yet another financial penalty for employees because they will have lost another day's wages, there is nothing in the Bill to punish him.

We had the same argument before when dealing with back-to-work legislation. In fact, we were able to convince the Minister of Labour to withdraw a similar clause from another Bill because we argued that it was unfair, unjust, and not balanced.

I hope the Government reconsiders these aspects because it is important that legislation such as this is balanced, rather than in favour of one side or the other.

Mr. Jim Jepson (London East): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak this morning on Bill C-86, an Act to ensure the continuation of postal services to all Canadians.

As regrettable as such action is, for I really believe in the rights of union workers, I commend the Minister for bringing forward legislation at this time to protect the innocent victims involved in a labour versus management dispute at the Post Office in that postal services to many people suffer.

There are hundreds of very responsible unions in Canada which successfully negotiate settlements with businesses right across the country. This system functions very well. However, with the right to strike also comes a responsibility and an accountability. We have clearly seen that the track record of CUPW is very poor. It has essentially lost that right because of its track record, because of continued disruptions and hardships placed upon small businesses whose cash flow has been severely hampered in prolonged strikes of the past.

Many hundreds of businesses have gone bankrupt and thousands of jobs have been lost. Old age pensioners have waited anxiously for their cheques in the mail, not knowing for sure whether they will come. The same applies to the disabled and those who receive mother's allowance and baby bonus cheques. We are in the midst of a United Way campaign which raises significant funds to help the needy and disadvantaged in Canada. All such things are being placed in jeopardy.

Unfortunately we have seen the actions of the past few weeks. We have seen the irresponsible actions of the unions on the picket lines. We have seen them sticking glue in mailboxes. We have seen them issuing directives saying that they will do everything to disrupt postal service at various postal depots. This clearly indicates that it is not a responsible executive.

We should not jump to the conclusion that they speak for all inside postal workers. There are many inside postal workers

who are very responsible and carry on their duties in a very conscientious way. However, I believe that many of these people are afraid to come forward and express their dissatisfaction with the actions of the CUPW executive for fear of reprisal, and we can certainly understand that. The unfortunate part is that all unions are tarred with the same brush by the irresponsible actions of the past few weeks and over the past few years.

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In the last 10 years there have been 711,000 days lost through strikes and illegal strikes at the Post Office. We have to ask why. If we take a look at the over-all plight of the postal workers we see the inside postal workers earning a salary with all benefits in the range of \$24.50 an hour. We see an absentee rate of full-time postal workers of 19.05 days a year, roughly four working weeks. That is scandalous. Compare that to the rate in private industry of six days per year. Interestingly we see a turnover rate in the post office of 3.52 per cent. That is virtually a zero turnover rate. If you compare that to private industry, it speaks volumes. It tells me as one Canadian that people obviously are reasonably content or they would be leaving. They know when they have job security, reasonable wages and benefits. So why leave?

In London alone in the quest for replacement workers there are 2,000 Canadians who are willing to take the job, its conditions, the hourly wage, the benefits at the Post Office. We are seeing union management saying that it is not prepared to accept \$24.50 an hour, and is not prepared to let anybody else do the job. It boils down to a very important principle. Management has to have the right to manage. For too many years the CUPE executive have been trying to manage and run the Post Office. I say unequivocally that public opinion is fed up with its actions.

I see in my own office, as a result of this legislation, as well as my own private Member's Bill, which is coming up shortly, to take away the right to strike and declares for all intents and purposes, the Post Office to be an essential service, an overwhelming positive reaction. People realize that CUPE has not shown itself to be responsible or having had the best interests of Canadians at heart. CUPE is prepared to jeopardize and compromise the postal service for its own benefit. This is unfortunate. I have had about 200 calls to my office in the last few days, 197 to be exact, 189 in favour and 8 against. Most of those identified themselves as inside postal workers.

We all realize that there is a responsibility incumbent upon management. Clearly it takes two to tango. It would not be just to point the finger at the union without pointing out that there are areas of discontent and problems within management of the Post Office. Clearly the spirit of confrontation has built up animosity and we have to work toward resolving that. Yet to the credit of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) he has done everything he can do to bring these parties together. He brought in Mr. Drouin and Mr. Foisy who conducted extensive