

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

In the short time that I have left I would like to speak about the Government's over-all plan for the Post Office. The Government has chosen to treat the Post Office as a private profit-making business rather than the public utility it is. Because of that it has married itself to the policy of privatization and franchising. It has thereby put itself on a collision course with the union because Foisy recognized that that policy is a threat to job security. The Government could have had a different plan for the Post Office. It could have taken a co-operative approach to labor-management negotiations. It could have put aside the faulty legislation it has brought forward to the House. It had an alternative. It has chosen confrontation rather than co-operation, and the public will see through its bluster.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Côté (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make an opening remark before asking my question to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper). First I must say it is comforting to see him when he gets his senses back, because I was somewhat concerned a moment ago when he began to speak. I think that the only thing which prevented him from jumping on his colleague from York South—Weston (Mr. Nunziata) was the distance between them. I simply cannot see him on a picket line, violence would flare up. While I am at it, here is a piece of advice for newspapermen: that was a very good example why they should never dare attack the leader (Mr. Broadbent).

Well, Mr. Speaker, postal workers from my riding came to see me yesterday but I was not there. I was expecting them on Wednesday. As a matter of fact I had asked my secretary to make an extra pot of coffee. However, since negotiations had started again, when the mailman came he told me it had been postponed. I was here yesterday, and since they could not come to my office, they sent me a telegram advising me they were against the tabling of special back-to-work legislation and asking me to put pressure on the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) to oblige Canada Post to bargain seriously with the unions to conclude a negotiated agreement. Mr. Speaker, I immediately informed the Minister of Labour of their demands.

First of all, I would like to say, as was mentioned earlier by the Hon. Member for Charlevoix (Mr. Hamelin) that governments and ministers are always reluctant to table special legislation. They do it because they have to. However, if we consider the rising tension on the picket lines and the incidents that have already occurred, I think it is preferable, in the circumstances, to adopt this Bill which, like all special legislation, is necessary, instead of waiting until something serious happens, when the Opposition will sorely regret the unwillingness to act of some Members and the unconditional support shown by others.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the postal workers in my riding and across Canada that the legislation tabled in the House allows for negotiations, and I am convinced and I

express the hope in this House that both parties will find the calm and serenity they need to negotiate an agreement as soon as possible. Mr. Speaker, my question will be very brief and to the point: Canadians already known the NDP is in favour of violence, as confirmed by the Hon. Member for New Westminster—Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett) and demonstrated in flamboyant style just now by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper) in his speech. Is he trying to tell Canadians we should wait for some regrettable incidents to occur before taking action and that if the NDP were the governing party, that is what he would do?

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to respond to the Hon. Member's comments on my Leader (Mr. Broadbent).

The Hon. Member asks what the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) is doing and where he is. He is attending a conference to fight against free trade. I believe that this is essential for the job security of Canadian workers.

The second point raised by the Hon. Member opposite to which I feel I must reply is the charge that the NDP is in favour of violence.

Mr. Speaker, this is not our policy. I know that there are sometimes exaggerations in politics, but we seriously have to ask ourselves this question: Who is in favour of violence? Who hired the strike-breakers? Does the Hon. Member not know that, when you hire scabs, there is a good chance that there will be violence? The use of strike-breakers promotes violence, and a Member of Parliament from Quebec should be particularly aware of this fact. Quebec is the only province in Canada with anti-scab laws. Why is this? Because there were violent strikes in Quebec in the past, and Quebecers found this unacceptable and uncivilized. They asked their Government to pass laws to ban the use of strike-breakers.

What I want to ask the Hon. Member is this: Who is in favour of violence? Is it, or is it not, his own Government that hired strike-breakers and that is promoting violence?

• (1440)

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, before I put my question to my hon. friend, I want to put it into context. Part of the Government's program which is expected to be carried out by the postal corporation is to phase out the postal system as we know it in our country. It wants to phase out thousands of employees and replace them with some central depots across the country. It wants to franchise the wickets and install supermailboxes which will essentially do away with the employees.

I would like the Minister to consider this observation. If he was to walk into his office at the end of the day and announce to his staff that he plans to phase out all of their jobs in the next while, what do you think would be the result of that announcement? Of course, the employees in the Minister's office would become very concerned and, I suspect, less than