

Canada Post Corporation Act

On June 8, 1973, I moved:

That this House regrets the drastic deterioration of the postal service in Canada during the past six years: including the closure of rural post offices; the reduction of urban service from six days to five days; the headlong costly rush to automation and computerization leading to job insecurity and low morale among employees—all this in the face of sharply increased postal rates which have seriously affected smaller Canadian publications, forcing many of them out of business; and urges the government to take the necessary action to restore this fundamentally important communication system to its former excellence.

That motion was voted down by members of the Liberal party.

On May 18, 1977, we tried again. I moved:

That this House notes with alarm the government's continuing inability to provide Canadians with an efficient postal service, its obsession with secrecy, its illegal use of orders in council to set postal rates, and its chronic ineptness in the field of collective bargaining and industrial relations, and recommends that the operations of the Post Office Department be referred to a special joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate.

That, too, was voted down by the members of the Liberal party.

Mr. Cullen: Was that moved under Standing Order 43?

Mr. Dinsdale: That was a substantive want of confidence motion, I should tell the hon. member. I am sure he must have been in the House.

Mr. Cullen: At that time, yes.

Mr. Dinsdale: I am sure he was aware that we used two of our precious opposition days to try, to the best of our ability, to get some action out of this government.

Bill C-27 was representative of the thinking of successive postmasters general. They were trying to combine both the Post Office Department and the new idea of a Crown corporation. The bill was opposed by everybody: labour and the public. Fortunately it died on the order paper.

Now we have Bill C-42. I do not think I need to add to what the Postmaster General said with regard to what this bill is endeavouring to do. Basically it is taking the important stand of keeping politicians at arm's length. I remember talking to the then postmaster general. I shall not mention names. It is impossible to identify him because there have been so many postmasters general. They seem to have been going around like a merry-go-round. I can refer to this particular gentleman without mentioning any names. No names, no pack drill. But he said to me, "Walter, we have to keep the Post Office Department. It is full of important patronage." That was the thinking behind Bill C-27. It was also one of the reasons why the Post Office was in such a mess and confusion. It has to be an arm's length relationship. This will come about, as I understand the bill.

The board of directors will include members of the unions. This is an idea that we have preached for years. I am sure the hon. Postmaster General is aware of this. It is not a new idea. It is industrial democracy. Our committee travelled to many places to see how others were dealing with problems of the Post Office in this technological revolutionary period. We discovered that in the United Kingdom they had introduced

industrial democracy into the post office. Incidentally, they became a Crown corporation in 1969 at the time our Post Office should have become a Crown corporation, had we listened to the Hon. Eric Kierans who had his head screwed on right.

● (1510)

Mr. Cullen: For a very short time.

Mr. Dinsdale: He could not stand it, so he left. He was wise. He bailed out along with John Turner and others who left over the years. The industrial democracy idea goes further than just having representatives from labour on the board of directors. It also calls for representatives from the major postal users. As a matter of fact, in the United Kingdom the postal users organization is formalized. There are three prongs of an efficient and reliable postal service sitting together on the board of directors, representatives from the government, labour and postal users.

I hope the Postmaster General is not going to ignore those who pay—and pay dearly—for the postal service. I hope he will include representatives of the users who have borne the heat and the burden of the day patiently, speaking for the small businessmen who have been going into bankruptcy because of continuing postal strikes and so on.

That is merely one recommendation I would make. I hope the government will go all the way with the industrial democracy concept. We all know that the Crown corporation formula is not a panacea. There are lot of Crown corporations in the federal government service. In fact, there are so many that they are without number. They are not even completely listed.

There are still labour problems in some Crown corporations. It is going to take a long time to establish a feeling of harmony, consensus and mutual trust in the Post Office Department. We have seen a breakdown of trust in this House of Commons, unfortunately, as was demonstrated here last night. However, out there in the great body politic I am sure the Postmaster General will realize that you cannot throw the book at a union leader like Jean-Claude Parrot who spent time in jail because of direct confrontation and aggravation over the years.

That will not be resolved overnight. The government, by its actions and attitudes, will have to reverse itself almost 180 degrees from the confrontationist route it has been taking over the years if we are ever to restore peace and harmony into the postal service. We must take action on the Finkelman report. When are we going to get action on the report of Mr. Justice Jacob Finkelman which was referred to a joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons, an excellent report that has been gathering dust until this day.

Certainly it is going to be much easier working under the Canada Labour Code than it was under the multiplicity of government departments which had their fingers in the pie. The poor deputy postmaster general, whom I have known over the years, really had no jurisdiction in managing. He was an efficient manager, and Mr. Uberig was an efficient adminis-