

Government Orders

That has not been finalized at this point and here in Parliament today we look at back-to-work legislation. I will reiterate again that none of my colleagues wishes to see a strike. We know that service to Canadians is the primary goal of Canada Post.

In reality, Canadians must be our first consideration, and when we realize that Canadians are our first consideration, we know that somehow labour and management must resolve this very, very vast ocean of differences that is there.

We know that Canada Post is responsible for the corporate plan it has put in place which in many, many regards has really caused much of this stress. We know that the government has supported Canada Post in its endeavours in this corporate plan. As a result, I would very strongly hold the government responsible for the strife that is now occurring with the workers and the corporation.

The government has said many, many times that it is not responsible for the ins and outs of Canada Post, but when something positive came out at Canada Post it said: "They have raised a profit. They have done extremely well in the last three years".

As a matter of fact, the government has claimed that Canada Post had profits in 1988-89 of \$96 million; in 1989-90, they were \$149 million and in 1990-91, they were \$14 million. Yet during the same time, subsidies for various postal services such as northern air services, publication mail, government free mail and literature for the blind, totalled some \$692 million during that same time period.

We all well know that during that same two year time period workers were not paid by contract because those contracts were not resolved. Therefore one must surmise on one hand that Canada Post and the government have been saying one thing and on the other hand they know what the reality is, which is something much different.

One then starts to question what is happening with the good faith between the government and the Canadian public. It is very important that credibility be maintained in government. I think we have come down the line with Canada Post and its emphasis on profits is something that is very negative toward the service we are trying to give Canadians.

The Canada Post corporate plan in 1986 placed a very great emphasis on profits. The plan called for the conversion or closure of 5,200 small rural community post offices. To date, over 1,000 have been closed. The plan called for a 40 per cent dividend to be paid to the government. However, at the same time the plan also called for improvements in employee-employer relationships. The improvements have not occurred. We know grievances have sky-rocketed to somewhere between 100,000 and 130,000. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers' contract which expired in July 1989 has not given any move to date.

The conciliation report of August 12, 1991 commented that the conciliation board has found no improvement in labour-management relationships. The extent of exacerbation has further increased in some instances to a point of contempt, if not palatable hatred and the distrust has reached new heights. The parties are not speaking. They are hurling abuse at each other. The comments go on to call on the conciliation process. Somehow we have to come up with a better process than we have seen occur at this point. Somehow management in Canada Post has to find a way to set up a better relationship between itself and the employees in CUPW. It is the responsibility of this government to carry on and make certain that there is some positive move in this area.

How did we come to this point? The government has basically taken a hands off approach to the negotiations between Canada Post and its workers. Every time problems have come up the government has said: "Canada Post is a Crown corporation. It has its corporate plan. We are not responsible for the actions of that corporate plan".

I and many of my colleagues tend to totally disagree with that. We believe the government is responsible and because of the Crown corporation status the government should watch and monitor very carefully what is happening. The government inevitably is responsible for the service to Canadians. It cannot allow the problems and the hatred to escalate as it has over the last seven years.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I just began a short time ago and I have approximately 10 minutes left if that is accurate.

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but we will have to proceed to Question Period. I am sure that the Table will keep track of the time.