

Private Members' Business

would make me really glad and I think that all Canadians would be pleased as well. But wishing that they would no longer need the right to strike at Canada Post and taking that right away from them is not the same thing, because what is proposed today is to abolish that right. That is quite a different story.

If the postal workers' union agrees with Canada Post, Don Landers on one side of the table and Jean-Claude Parrot and his colleagues on the other, if they sit down and negotiate to abolish the right to strike and agree to replace it with something else starting right now, then they can go to the minister and tell him that they both agree there is a better way. That would not be the House or parliamentarians imposing what other people want on some people. It would be what both management and the union want.

I would really like that, because I do not want any more strikes at Canada Post either. I will conclude by saying again that I certainly do not want to support a bill that would unilaterally take away rights from workers at Canada Post and totally unbalance the situation in that corporation. It is so hard to find a balance within that outfit because, as I said before, things seldom go well there and often go very badly. That is not a recent situation, I am the first to admit.

[English]

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell my colleagues that I, for one, do not intend to vote for this bill. My intention is not one where I do not favour an end to strikes at Canada Post, there is nothing I would like better, but that is a different story. I do not think we should take away the rights of one party in favour of another. I would really wish, though, that both sides would get together and do their best to ensure that we do not have any more of those awful disputes that we had last summer or the summer prior at Canada Post. They were not good. Many innocent Canadians were harmed in the process. I will say it here: Some of the things that some of the workers did I found repugnant, they were awful, trying to prevent senior citizens from getting their cheques and so on. That was wrong. Some of the things that management did was worse. So there is no innocent party in all of this.

Who provoked who the most? I have my own suspicions, having had management of Canada Post at committee last week, but I will leave it at that, save and except to say that I cannot support this bill, even though

I would wish that there would be no more strikes at Canada Post. The removal of the rights of the workers completely is certainly not the way that I as an independent member—because this is private members' hour—would like to see it done.

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words in support of Bill C-304, a bill to amend the Canada Labour Code with respect to the Canada Post Corporation. In effect, it declares Canada Post an essential service and removes the right to strike and the right to lock out the employees of Canada Post.

• (1740)

I have listened carefully this evening to the debate which seems to have revolved around who is right and who is wrong in labour disputes relating to Canada Post, whether or not the union is wrong in the way that it treats the situation and its attitudes toward a strike, whether or not management is wrong in the way that it treats the situation and its attitude toward a strike or a lock out.

The issue, Mr. Speaker, as you know, as I know, and as all Canadians know, is not the hardship on the union, not the hardship on management, but it is the hardship on the average Canadian. Where does the average Canadian stand in all this? What is the impact on an average Canadian when there is a strike or when there is a lock out and Canadians are deprived of their mail service?

I suppose there are not many Canadians who would not want to be deprived of some of the junk mail that goes through our post office services these days. I get letters all the time—I suspect you do as well—saying put an end to that, get rid of the junk mail.

It is an entirely different story when we are talking about first class mail, particularly if they are talking about a cheque, a cheque for a senior citizen, a cheque for a small business. As far as small business is concerned, the Canada Post system with its monopoly on first class mail is in fact an essential service.

As far as the senior citizen receiving a pension cheque, there are alternatives now, the direct deposit concept, which I advocate and which makes a good deal of sense but which is not without its flaws, its difficulties and its problems from time to time. For those senior citizens still concerned about getting a cheque in the mail then Canada Post is in fact an essential service.