

Time Allocation

The Government says it wants to stop violence and confrontation and get people back to the bargaining table, but it provoked the confrontation in the first place through a set-up, and then by telling the workers that they would be forced back to work with perhaps the most Draconian labour legislation that we have seen in recent years in this country.

There was further evidence of the hypocrisy of the Government in the words of the Member for Crowfoot. He talked about how important the postal service is to rural Canada. As a Member from a rural area he is no doubt very aware of how important the postal service is to rural people, not merely for the delivery of letters but as a source of information about the federal government and as a gathering place.

● (1620)

That is why when the Government threatened the postal service in rural Canada there arose a grass roots movement called Rural Dignity, of which I am sure the Hon. Member is aware. That organization set out to fight the closing of rural post offices, to prevent the Government from taking away their postal service, their link with the federal Government, and the decent jobs and status which postmasters and postmistresses had in rural communities.

Everyone who comes from a rural area or is familiar with rural Canada knows that the postmistress is a very important and highly regarded member of the community. She is quite often a commissioner of oaths or justice of the peace as well and has looked after the needs of the rural community in official matters. That is not a job which can be done by a clerk earning a minimum wage, who has other jobs to do as well. A person operating a grocery store cannot provide postal service at the same time.

I have a letter written by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) on August 14, 1984 when he was the Leader of the Opposition. The letter is to the national president of the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association. It reads:

The Progressive Conservative Party feels that Canada Post's current program of rapid debt reduction is unrealistic, and is the underlying cause of problems with regard to both declining postal service and ventures into ill-conceived schemes to generate greater revenue.

The Prime Minister said:

It is not possible for me to promise at this time that a Conservative government will re-instate full rural postal service within a year, or that all laid-off postal workers will be immediately re-hired. I can assure you, however, that restoring the quality of service will be our top priority with Canada Post.

The Prime Minister has not done that. Instead, his Government has allowed Canada Post to downgrade the services of the Post Office and is now participating in an unholy alliance with the managers of Canada Post to introduce Draconian legislation into the House to force their plans upon the workers of Canada. Contained in that legislation are some of the worst provisions I have ever seen with regard to labour.

The legislation provides that if an employee of Canada Post who holds a union position violates this law he will not be

allowed to work for the union for a period of five years. This kind of Draconian legislation is comparable to banishment, or the outlawry of the middle ages. That is what the South Africans do when they do not like what journalists write. They ban them and they are no longer allowed to work in South Africa.

The Government does not want this legislation to be debated because it is afraid that the people of Canada will learn what is really contained in that Bill and what is really going on. We should never see such legislation in this House. It should never be passed as quickly as the Government wants it to be passed. It must be fully debated. All Members must have an opportunity to speak and tell the people of Canada what the Government is doing.

This legislation is detrimental to the workers, the postal service, and the people of Canada.

The Government has allowed postal service to deteriorate under the plans of Canada Post. It is doing nothing to improve the quality of service. This legislation will make things worse in the Post Office and worse for the workers and the people of Canada.

Mr. Felix Holtmann (Selkirk—Interlake): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to enter into this debate today on the imposition of time allocation on Bill C-86. We have just heard from the new authorities of the New Democratic Party. I congratulate them on entering this House but, having listened to what the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. Harris) and the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Ms. Dewar) had to say, it is obvious that they need a history lesson.

The words came out in full colour this afternoon. The Member for St. John's East must have used the word "Draconian" 30 times. I am not sure he knows the meaning of the word. He heard it from one of his colleagues earlier today and suddenly everything is Draconian. We have heard that expression before from the Member from Nickel Belt who, when speaking on this motion, spoke to the Members behind him. He did not even have the courtesy to speak to the rest of the House of Commons.

The Member for Hamilton Mountain talked about women. She is the great protector of women. Does she know how many people, including women, were put out of business because of the last postal strike? Nine thousand people lost jobs due to the last major postal strike and many of them were women.

Mr. Rodriguez: What's your source?

Mr. Holtmann: My source is the Federation of Independent Business. Madam Speaker, one must wonder who the New Democratic Party supports. Those Members support the union. They support the union because it finances their Party. They do not represent management or the users of the Post Office. They do not really care about women or the users of the Post Office. Let us review the history of the negotiations. The negotiations have been going on for the last 15 months, yet the