

Government Orders

Canada Post has the worst record in Canada as a bad and dishonest employer toward its employees. It has racked up an incredible total of 100,000 outstanding grievances. Some of those grievances have been entered by constituents who have come to me to ask me to help. They know their union is trying but with 100,000 grievances blocking the road, the chances of getting a reasonable, early and just settlement are pretty dim.

I believe that Canada Post was willing to have those grievances pile up in order to force the union out on strike. The grievance procedure is half a century old, developed first in the United States and then in all parts of Canada. The grievance procedure is an essential part of modern labour relations so that employees do not have to go on a wildcat strike in order to get an injustice rectified.

There is a procedure. You start with a steward and so on. You work up. Eventually you go to arbitration. In return for that procedure, plus other key matters such as seniority clauses, the union signs a contract. Even without seniority clauses, that procedure, at least in the province of Ontario and I believe in the other provinces, is part of the law. It is based on the law that there shall be a procedure of that sort although the details of it vary from contract to contract.

Without that procedure no union in its right senses would sign a contract. What the union gives in a contract is the guarantee that there will be no work stoppage during the life of the contract. That is the labour peace that is bought by union contract.

The most dynamic employers of our country such as the auto industry well understand the efficiency and the financial value to the owners of signing a contract. It does not mean they agree to everything the union wants. The union does not get everything it asks for. The company does not get everything it asks for.

Both sides understand that they have to make cars. They have to have an orderly work process and so they settle on a contract, sometimes with a short strike, but not with the kind of dishonesty that Canada Post has displayed in the handling of a strike. Canada Post advertised for casual workers and swore up and down it did not intend to use them for strike-breakers which was all it was intending to use them for. It hired helicopters

to bring the mailbags in and out of the sorting station in eastern Toronto, paying non-unionized Canada Post employees their room, board and travel expenses to replace unionized staff and so on.

These are dishonest strike-breaking practices which I hope before too long will be outlawed in the province of Ontario, as some of them are outlawed in the province of Quebec.

An hon. member: So a company cannot run its business.

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is afraid that somebody might go on strike. There is that possibility. There is also the possibility that the company will violate the contract and force a union out on strike. The union has two recourses against violation of the contract by the company. One is the grievance procedure which the management of Canada Post has destroyed by blockading it. The other is the right to strike at the appropriate legal time, which is what the union followed.

The company not only showed its bad faith in the time leading up to and during the strike, but Canada Post showed particularly bad faith in the settlement of the strike. It was proposed by go-betweens that there should be a resolution, that the union would come back to work and that an arbitrator would be imposed because both Canada Post and the union said there were only about seven, eight or nine items left of dozens and dozens that had been on the table in dispute.

The union not only agreed to come back to work, it sent out the word to its members to come back to work as soon as possible. Many of them came back before the deadline. They wanted to demonstrate their good faith in getting the post office working again.

After the arbitrator was appointed, management withdrew what it had already agreed as part of the offer. That was thoroughly dishonest. Six months later there is still no contract. There is now this gimmick to try to put the union entirely out of the picture.

There is no way that the employees of Canada Post are going to trust the management that destroys its union contract by violation and by outright deception. There is no way they are going to trust them in return for gold stars or a gimmick like that which are used in some companies to set one worker against another to try to