

this essential service disrupted. That is a position with which I agreed, and the people at the post offices at Fergus and Orangeville in my area of Canada agreed with that very directly. Indeed, in the case of Orangeville during the last great postal disruption the workers stayed on the job, kept the post office open and provided service to some 12,000 homes which were served by the Orangeville post office and by the various subpost offices which are fed through the Orangeville post office. For their efforts they found themselves blacklisted by the union, and it was only recently that the local in Orangeville was restored to full union participation.

Leading up to this strike the members of the local at Orangeville took a look at the situation. They decided that in the national interest it was essential that this public service be kept in operation. They felt they had an obligation to the communities they served to stay on the job and to keep the mail flowing, and they voted in a very responsible way. They decided to stay on the job. In addition to that, they decided to write to some 94 different locals across the country to urge their workers to stay on the job. They signed the letter "from proud Canadians" and gave their names. In response to those 94 letters they received some 19 replies, of which only four were not favourable. It was clear from the responses that there was a strong sentiment in favour of keeping the post office open and working for Canadians.

Post office workers in Orangeville and Fergus reported for work on Monday and Tuesday of last week, and they kept service going for members of the communities served by those post offices. However, what was their reward for doing so? Their reward was to be told on Tuesday afternoon that they were not to report for work on Wednesday.

The Post Office Department denies that those workers were locked out, but there is only one word which applies when postal management, as a result of a labour dispute, decides not to allow people who want to work to report for work. Management locks them out. Management locked the doors of the post office and told its workers that they could not come in and that they could not keep the service going. Having crawled out on a limb to provide an essential service to Canadians, these dedicated and patriotic Canadians found that post office management decided to saw that limb off. I referred to that in the House of Commons last week as a disgraceful betrayal by post office management of those dedicated workers. If anything, those words are too generous to postal management, who decided to lock its workers out.

What were the results? The first was that, having jeopardized their relationship with their union, having run the risk of retaliation from people who were unhappy with the stand they took, and having decided to keep service going for the many thousands of homes in the communities they served, they found that the doors were locked by Post Office management, that they were refused work and that they were told to go home without pay.

Surely these workers deserve better. Surely Canadians deserve better. If there is one lesson to be learned from this, it is that if postal management and the government decide in the

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future that they want to ask dedicated public servants to put themselves on the line, to make sacrifices in the national interest and to set an example for the rest of Canadians—the type of behaviour necessary if we are to deal with our pressing economic and social problems—then it is incumbent upon the post office and the government to ensure that these people are not left alone out in the cold. These workers and Canadians as a whole deserve much better.

Mr. D. M. Collenette (Parliamentary Secretary to Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to point out that on October 19 last the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo (Mr. Beatty) misled the House. Knowing the hon. member, I am sure he would not do so intentionally. He said then and he said tonight that postal employees in Orangeville, Ontario were locked out and sent home without pay. Similar allegations were made by his colleagues, the hon. member from Oakville and the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall).

Mr. Beatty: He will not be the hon. member for Oakville until after the election.

Mr. Collenette: In misleading the House I think the hon. member is demonstrating a trait of Conservative members in recent weeks. They have been taking extreme licence with the facts and contributing to the climate of apprehension throughout the country regarding this urgent matter.

With some patience the minister explained in the House that there had been no lock-out as this term is understood in labour relations circles. Perhaps the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo does not fully understand the term "lock-out" as it pertains to management-labour relations. The minister said that employees were sent home for lack of work. Such action is known universally as a "lay-off", not a "lock-out".

● (2237)

I hasten to explain that lay-offs are general practice when there is no work for employees to perform. The post office has laid off employees when there have been legal strikes, but it is not the practice of the department to lay its employees off when some members are on an illegal strike. Before the passage of Bill C-8, the strike of CUPW workers was legal. After the passage of Bill C-8 it was no longer legal and employees who wished to work were encouraged to do so. Even though, I am sure, the distinction is quite clear to the hon. member for Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo, he persisted in referring to what he called the disgraceful policy of lock-out, and he reiterated that comment tonight.

Later, in response to a question from the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi (Mr. Grafftey), the minister further clarified the situation. Having consulted with his deputy minister and been assured that no cases of lock-out had occurred, the minister said:

There have been no "lock-outs" anywhere in the country, and therefore any employee who comes to work will be received and paid.