

*Time Allocation*

that the parties spent a lot of time translating their demands into clauses for the agreement. And this is what he added: Except for the last day of the talks, which was August 12 this year, exchanges between the parties did not go beyond matters of principle and their justification. Consequently, as far as specific recommendations on the wording were concerned, the commissioner was not in a position to assess all the practical implications. In most cases, he accepted the wording as proposed by the parties. And if this approach leads to practical problems for the parties, they will have only themselves to blame, said the conciliation commissioner, since they had more than five months to send me their comments.

Madam Speaker, this paragraph alone should be enough to make us realize the obvious lack of constructive attempts to reach an agreement, as well as the frustration the commissioner must have felt in his attempt to bring the parties closer together on these issues.

Madam Speaker, what the Government is proposing is that for ninety days, a mediator-arbitrator will try to reconcile the parties. After ninety days of talks, the items still at issue . . . at that time, an arbitrator will be appointed and will settle the items still pending. Madam Speaker, I assume that meanwhile, postal employees will go back to work and will continue to be paid, and the rule or the principle followed customarily in collective bargaining when there is no agreement will be to use the services of an arbitrator, who will then settle the dispute. So why should we wait indefinitely and run the risk of having violent incidents? I also think it is important that Opposition Members should let this legislation be passed as soon as possible, to avoid financial loss for the parties concerned and so that Canadians can receive their mail and these people can go back to work.

Madam Speaker, I would like to mention that yesterday, representatives of union members in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean area were at my riding office in Jonquière, to tell me about their concerns about the current dispute.

What surprised me was how those people were “demotivated” by what they were experiencing in the work place. I have a feeling the higher echelons or instructions coming from the top are simply ignoring the needs of union members—there is a lack of work motivation, and what I perceived upon listening to those employees is not normal. I wonder if their union leaders are aware of the needs of people, at the grassroots, people in the different post offices, what they experience, their concerns and expectations. My feeling is they only care about major issues and fail to look below at what is going on in the field.

It is my hope their leaders will also go and find out about the real needs and expectations of their members in the field, because a corporation that has 72,000 employees—Canada Post Corporation—is a big corporation in terms of jobs. They should make sure that working conditions are improved at Canada Post Corporation. Right now this seems to be a *must*. Something has to be done in that area.

I will therefore concur with the Government so that the Bill be passed, even though actually I would have preferred that being done through the normal negotiation process and an agreement being reached.

But in view of the circumstances, because of the deadlock, we must assume our responsibilities and make sure those people do not unduly lose money because of a protracted strike.

● (1610)

[English]

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East):** Madam Speaker, I want to speak to this motion because in introducing it the Government is doing the same thing it is doing with the Bill itself; that is, it is trying to force its plan on the Post Office workers and force its will on this Parliament. In enacting this legislation the Government is showing the highest form of hypocrisy. It creates a crisis and then attempts to resolve it by Draconian means. The hypocrisy of the Government is very clear even in the title of the Bill itself.

The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) told the House over the last couple of days that the mail was going through and the Post Office was operating efficiently. Yet his Government puts before the House a Bill entitled “An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services.” If the postal service is operating and the mail is getting through, why do we need a Bill to continue postal services?

Pressure was being put on Post Office management through this collective action in an attempt to negotiate a decent collective agreement. What did the Government do? Instead of letting that process continue, it advised the House and its Post Office managers that it would not let a strike go on for very long. What was the result? Its Post Office managers refused from that point on to engage in any meaningful negotiations with the workers. The Government, by its actions, set the stage for the end of negotiations, because of a lack of good faith bargaining by Post Office management.

During the period of rotating strikes there was no major disruption of postal service, and this despite the fact that the Government allowed a Crown corporation to engage in active strike-breaking through the hiring of scabs. To permit a Crown agency to engage in that kind of union-busting activity was a shameful act on the part of the Government. That outrageous behaviour brought about this situation which has caused massive problems throughout the country.

The Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) gave a litany of reasons why this strike ought to be ended. However, he did not tell the House that all of the incidents which he listed occurred after the Government introduced this Draconian back-to-work legislation which takes away the rights of workers. These instances occurred because the Government introduced this legislation. That is an example of the hypocrisy we hear in this House.