

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

conditions and will be put into a situation of having no protection, poor working conditions, and earning minimum wage. That is the direction in which the Government will take Canada Post and it is completely unacceptable.

What is the option, Madam Speaker? The option is not Draconian legislation and it is not caving in to the Canada Post Corporation or to CUPW. The option is to create an environment of decent working conditions and accept that union and management should be able to bargain in good faith without the Government and the Corporation poisoning the water hole. This situation was created by deliberate design. The poisoned environment, for which the previous Liberal Government has substantial responsibility, becomes self-justification for privatizing the Post Office and getting it off the backs of Canadians, as the Conservative Government so often puts it.

We must change this by creating a decent environment within the Post Office and encouraging the collective bargaining process to resolve this matter. That was the purpose of passing the law to create the Canada Post Corporation. It was not to permit the Conservatives to do this to the country.

Mr. Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Member for Comox—Powell River (Mr. Skelly). Clause 7 of the Bill refers the mediator-arbitrator to the conciliation report. In fact, at the top of page 4 of the Bill it says that the mediator-arbitrator should give due cognizance to the conciliation report. We know that the conciliation report is slanted in favour of the franchising out of postal operations. I would like to ask the Member some questions on this subject.

There are various circumstances surrounding franchising. On the one hand, the Government may decide to close a local post office and have the service provided by a franchise in a drug store or a convenience store. In this situation people who were being paid decent salaries of approximately \$13 an hour could be replaced by people earning the minimum wage. On the other hand, in the situation of an entire new subdivision being built where no post offices previously existed the Post Office could decide to have the mail delivered by a franchise operation.

What does the Member think of these possibilities? Does he think that the Government should have directed the mediator-arbitrator to give "due cognizance" to the conciliation report?

Mr. Skelly: Madam Speaker, the issue of franchising out is complex. There are two ways in which to serve communities in which there is not sufficient volume to justify a full-time operation. There are many such communities in remote areas. My riding is filled with them. On the other hand, when new communities develop where there is a substantial amount of work to be done, creative means can be used to keep operations within a collective bargaining agreement under the framework of the union. The new outlook postal stations have fallen within the purview of the union agreement and have been very

successful. However, the postal corporation is not interested in expanding services. The supermailbox is an example of the corporation's failure to deliver mail to homes in new subdivisions. A chaotic and ridiculous situation has been created.

As the Member well knows, if the Government and the postal corporation wanted to deal in good faith with their employees and the communities they serve we would see solid progress with due and fair cognizance of the situation. The corporation would be trying to keep as many of the positions as possible in the expanded service area within the framework of CUPW and the Post Office. Rather than that, Canada Post has deliberately tried to franchise out in order to get rid of CUPW positions and drop the wage levels from \$12 or \$14 an hour to \$4.50 an hour. I know that my colleague is aware of that and is as concerned about it as we are.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Are there further questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Saint-John's East (Mr. Harris).

Ms. Copps: I rise on debate, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I would like to advise the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) that there are still five minutes available for questions and comments and the Hon. Member has asked for the floor. I do hope that she does agree with the Chair for once.

Mr. Harris: Madam Speaker, would the Hon. Member care to comment on the remarks made by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) this morning in debate? He said that if responsible officials of the union violate the Act and are convicted they will not be able to serve in responsible capacities in the union. The legislation, of course, says that if an individual is convicted, that individual may not be an officer or representative of the union and shall not be employed in any capacity by or act as an officer or representative of the union at any time within the next five years. Would the Hon. Member comment on this provision? It seems to be an additional punishment on the individual, who may not be employed in any capacity by another entity for a period of five years.

● (1240)

As a lawyer, this seems to be a reprehensible indication of the Government's intention to control the activities of individuals in the union movement of this country. Will the Hon. Member comment on that?

Mr. Skelly: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member's point is extremely relevant. When an individual is charged with breaking the law of the land, that person must answer to that charge and, if guilty, the court would impose a fit sentence. Once the sentence is served, the individual should definitely be eligible to resume his or her activities as a citizen of Canada. That is a part of the concept of paying a penalty.