

Government Orders

mendations that the way to do that is to refuse to sign a collective agreement with your employees.

Imagine how humiliated those people working for the post office this morning will feel when they find out that while the government has decided not to sign a collective agreement for nearly three years with the employees of the post office, the government members are standing up and saying: "We found a solution. Forget collective agreements, we have this star idea. We are going to give everybody a gold star if they perform well". It is embarrassing and humiliating.

Now we have Bill C-73. This is the ace in the hole. They said that already the people of Canada, including those who work for the post office, own the post office. It is a Crown corporation. We own it. The government says: "We have another idea. We are going to allow you, who already own the post office, to buy shares in the post office but there will be no voting and you will have no say in its operation". Somehow this is supposed to get people elated.

• (1040)

This is awful. It is awful for the House of Commons to spend time on this sort of nonsense. Imagine what every rank and file worker is feeling across this country who works for the post office.

Here they were waiting for a collective agreement, waiting for some leadership from the government, and this is what they got, Bill C-73.

An hon. member: More letters to Santa Claus.

Mr. Riis: The whole thing is laughable, but it is sad. It is sad when we consider that one of the most important services we have in this country from the federal government is the postal service. This is the kind of management approach, the kind of paternalistic approach to those thousands of hard-working employees across the country. All of us, from our own personal experience, whether it is in our work as members of Parliament, meeting with those who work for the postal corporation, whether it is our friends who happen to be members of various unions attached to the postal corporation or their affiliates, or whether it is simply the people who deliver our mail whom we know personally, these individuals are dedicated and committed Canadians.

They work very hard to deliver the mail. As others have stated, one of the most effective and efficient systems in spite of management and in spite of this

government is Canada's post office. The rank and file workers of the post office are committed to the post office, committed to mail delivery, committed to a high level of service and committed to the people of Canada. I cannot say that of the government or of most of management. I wish I could.

Let us look at the legislation. Bill C-73 will make 10 per cent of Canada Post non-voting shares available for purchase by Canada Post employees on a voluntary basis. As soon as this was uttered by the postal corporation, those who work for the corporation came forward and said that this was absolute nonsense. Therefore, here we are continuing on.

An hon. member: Did Don Lander say that?

Mr. Riis: A number of people are suggesting that this is the beginning of the full privatization of Canada Post. I know the minister responsible for Canada Post has said that this is not the case. What did he say? If you listen to what he actually said, it was: "There are no immediate privatization plans in the cards". He went on to say on May 1, 1992: "If I had to bet, I would bet that in the next couple of decades you will see post offices being privatized all over the world and I would not mind seeing Canada first". That was a minister of the cabinet responsible for Canada Post saying that he would love to see Canada Post privatized. He said this is not immediate privatization. We are suggesting that this is the first step.

Then the Prime Minister has said that he is not aware of any plans to privatize the post office. As a matter of fact, he said he would not be in favour of that. This is the Prime Minister who had other things to say.

On April 13, 1988 the Prime Minister said that some people wanted to buy the CBC but that the CBC was not for sale. He said that Air Canada was not for sale. We all know that the government sold Air Canada, beginning in 1988 with the shares offered first to its employees. In other words, this is the government's approach. The first step is to sell some of the shares to the employees before moving into full privatization.

I say that the Conservative Government record speaks for itself. When you want to privatize a major Crown corporation, you offer some shares to the employees first before you go on to the general share market. We oppose this because it will have absolutely nothing to do with improving labour-management relations with the postal corporation.