

Postal Rates

Mr. Fraser: The hon. member made this speech the other night.

Mr. Rodriguez: I am just recapping so that it will read with some continuity in *Hansard*.

Mr. Fraser: It is appreciated.

Mr. Rodriguez: I am glad that the minister is here, Mr. Speaker; I make these suggestions in all honesty and fair-mindedness. I think that Mr. Corkery and Mr. Paré have been the bones of contention in the Post Office. Indeed, the insights that Mr. Corkery had are well documented in transcripts of the trial of Jean-Claude Parrot. I will quote from that transcript because it gives us an insight into the kind of leadership in the Post Office, the leadership of Mr. Corkery. At page 221 of the transcript of the trial it deals with the impressions Mr. Paré said he had. Indeed, it was part and parcel of the strategizing to deal with the latest incident of industrial dispute in the Post Office. The question asked was this:

Did you have any particular, apart from this information gathering technique, did you have any other strategy at the point of the legal strike call?

Mr. Corkery answered:

Well, I think our strategy basically had to be based, was based on the assumption that the majority of the employees would not support a full-blown strike. Whether that was valid or not nevertheless it was the strategy on which we based our planning, and really, in that situation, it was a "wait and see" kind of strategy—the extent of it, the degree of it, could they sustain it, or would it die of its own accord.

Here we have management of the Post Office entering into negotiation with a strategy in mind that, in effect, the workers could not sustain a strike anyway, so why should they have to negotiate in good faith? In my opinion that is very eye-opening, and I recommend to the minister that he read this transcript. If I had a person responsible to me as a manager, I would fire him on the spot after reading this transcript.

At page 224 of the transcript the question asked was:

So your assessment, let us say by the 17th October, would be what, in relation to the over-all operation?

The answer given by Mr. Corkery was as follows:

We had misjudged, miscalculated our strategy, and basically they had been able to launch a full-blown strike, and we were out of it.

Finally on page 254 the question asked was this:

And it was your view, when you found out what was going on in the field, that legislation would not be required? When you found out what was going on, as you indicated this morning, you were of the view that the majority of the employees of the Post Office, CUPW, would not support a strike?

The answer to that question was this:

Our original recommendation to our minister was on the basis that we thought that if we went the legal strike route they would not be able to sustain the strike.

So the advice and the whole strategy for negotiations that the minister was getting from chief personnel in his department was based on the fact that they believed the workers could not sustain a strike. That is bargaining in bad faith. Mr. Speaker, that is absolute bargaining in bad faith.

I make this suggestion again to the minister, that in my opinion the top brass of the Post Office should be removed. If he wants to shuffle them off to Buffalo or send them to the

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

Senate or promote them to the level of their incompetence, go right ahead. But I think these people have been abrasive in terms of human relation in the Post Office and ought to be removed. That is the only way we can create any sort of harmonious industrial climate in the Post Office. I make those suggestions to the minister in good faith. The minister has a golden opportunity to start again.

My last point concerns the question of the Crown corporation. I heard those phonies on the Liberal opposition benches asking the minister when he will bring in the Crown corporation bill. Those people had 16 years to do it. There were several recommendations by way of royal commissions recommending the establishment of a Crown corporation in the Post Office. When was the bill brought in for a Crown corporation in the Post Office? It was in the twilight months of Liberal office before the last election. So those people were not serious about the Crown corporation.

I say to the minister that it gives me some cause for concern when he says that the Crown corporation bill will be brought in after Christmas. He did not say which Christmas. I wish the minister would indicate which Christmas. Will it be the Christmas of 1980, the Christmas of 1981 or the Christmas of 1983? The workers themselves in the Post Office agreed to the suggestion that the Post Office ought to be made a Crown corporation.

There is one further thing that gives me some cause for concern. I asked the Postmaster General—and he is a fine chap—if he would hold firm because in his back benches he has a gentleman, now elected to this House from York East, who undertook a study for the Conservative party when it was in opposition with respect to the Post Office. Among his suggestions I find two of them which are totally odious and would indeed exacerbate conditions in the Post Office at this time. One suggestion he proposed—and I am speaking of the hon. member for York East (Mr. Ritchie), who I think has a following in those back benches—was the removal of the right to strike by postal workers. I cannot think of any action that would throw the Post Office into even more turmoil than we have experienced over the last 16 years than this one. I urge the minister to ignore that recommendation completely.

The second recommendation which gives us concern on this side of the House is the one that proposes that those sectors of the Post Office which are flexible or viable should be sheared off to the private sector—in other words, those parts of the Post Office which generate surplus so that we can cross-subsidize those parts of the Post Office that are predominately service. In effect, he is promoting privatization. I cannot think of anything more detrimental to the Post Office than shearing off the potentially profitable sectors of the postal service into private hands. In effect, what will happen is that the deficits in the Post Office will rise, Parliament will be asked to increase postal rates continually and, of course, it will discourage public usage. That is a dead end, a cul-de-sac. I suggest that the minister ignore those two particular recommendations of the Ritchie report completely because they are two of the most dangerous proposals in the report.