

*Adjournment Debate*POST OFFICE—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON POSTAL STRIKE. (A)  
SUSPENSION OF RIGHT TO STRIKE

**Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton):** Mr. Speaker, my topic this evening as well is the Post Office and the current strike to which all Canadians are being subjected. As we all know, the right to strike within the Post Office and other essential government services was granted by a Liberal government in 1967. Since then a dozen or more strikes have taken place within the Post Office itself, nearly one per year. In fact, since 1975, in the last six years, seven strikes within the Post Office, have taken place; in other words, more than one in each year, and all those strikes under Liberal government administration.

Yet today we find ourselves faced with inconsistency on the part of the front benches and of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau); inconsistencies such as this: During the 1978 postal strike which the Liberal government legislated "back to work", the postmaster general at the time said "when an individual right becomes a public wrong, Parliament should terminate the dispute. That was less than three years ago. Last week the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) of this same government said, in so far as legislating postal workers back to work is concerned, "I think if you are saying you have to legislate, then you are saying there should not be a right to strike". I am paraphrasing. That is the inconsistency. The government legislated the postal workers back to work after a stoppage of work of one day in 1978. Today the government is saying that perhaps it will let them strike all summer.

I have another quotation by the Prime Minister of just last Monday. When asked about legislating the Canadian Union of Postal Workers back to work, he said, "we cannot legislate CUPW back to work because they will disobey the order". That is probably one of the most ridiculous statements made by any prime minister or politician. If he is afraid to legislate a law because someone would disobey it, we should not have any laws at all.

That same Prime Minister of that quotation a week ago said today, in response to a question dealing with legislating the postal workers back to work, "we cannot legislate CUPW back to work because that is what they want." That is a total inconsistency within a week. I submit that these are political games.

● (2020)

Canadians are hurt badly by any essential service strike, but particularly by this strike. In 1978 the interest rates small businessmen had to pay were between 7 per cent and 10 per cent. They have to borrow money when they cannot depend on day to day mail delivery. Small businesses depend on day to day mail delivery for their cash flow. Today that interest rate is 20 per cent. Small businesses are paying somewhere around 21 per cent, 22 per cent and perhaps 23 per cent, and the government is sitting back and saying, "We cannot deal with the situation because we must be fair." Yet all the reports, including one by Judge Rene Marin's commission of inquiry, have concluded that there are serious problems within the Post

Office. For example, the Post Office has a deficit this year of \$457 million. The study estimated an annual loss due to theft, arson and vandalism in excess of \$4.3 million. For example, between 1975 and 1979, \$10 million in government cheques were lost in the mail.

One of the demands CUPW is making is that there not be cameras to show people stealing and vandalizing, but that is what they have been doing, according to the report by Judge Rene Marin. I believe the government should start being consistent and start being tough with the union because the union's demands go beyond its needs. Even according to the union, the monetary problems have been solved, yet the union is trying to hold the Canadian public to ransom. It is doing just that, and Canadian industry is losing to the tune of nearly \$10 million a day. Unemployment is affecting nearly 10,000 workers a week as a result of the postal strike. Businesses are dropping like dead flies off the ceiling through bankruptcy as a result of being robbed of the essential service of day to day mail delivery.

I am not suggesting that we should eliminate the right to strike in essential services right across the board, although that is the wish of the majority of Canadians. However, I believe we should suspend the right to strike in essential services until this government has stopped dealing in an ad hoc, hit and miss way with postal strikes and with strikes in other essential service sectors. The right to strike should be suspended until this government has come up with a policy to reduce the number of strikes and the possibility of strikes taking place in the essential sectors of our economy. It should introduce legislation dealing with sector bargaining, for example, or providing that at least 51 per cent of the rank and file members vote in favour of a strike, instead of just a select few who speak on behalf of all 23,000 postal employees.

Perhaps the government should introduce such legislation as the Taft-Hartly Act in the United States which would postpone a strike date by 60 days until negotiations can take place.

In closing my remarks this evening I urge the government to take specific action in this matter and to stop dealing with these very serious strike situations in this country on an ad hoc basis. The government should come up with a full-fledged, long-term policy which would at least reduce the hardships which are being faced by all Canadians as a result of strikes in essential services in this country.

**Mr. Norman Kelly (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services):** Mr. Speaker, I point out to the hon. gentleman opposite that although the legislation he referred to was introduced by a Liberal administration in 1967, it was passed with the support of all three parties of this House.

**Mr. Knowles:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kelly:** That is something he should remember. He should remember too that the Public Service Staff Relations Act created 80 bargaining units, each of which have the option of choosing one of two dispute resolution methodologies, either of which the employer must accept. There is no option whatso-