

Business of the House

We saw in the Canada Post strike where the government and Canada Post deliberately withheld cheques, deliberately put Canadians in the position where they might develop animosity toward the postal workers. We have a government which is committed here to turning Canadians against each other.

The member for Burlington asked how can a handful of people hold up ships in the harbour—or whatever the case may be, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian people are asking how much longer will this handful of people called the Conservative caucus run this country, when they are only supported by a handful of Canadians. People are tired of being handled by this handful of disreputable people called the government. What we see out there today, Mr. Speaker, on the lawn of Parliament is not a handful of people; we see tens of thousands of workers representing tens and hundreds of thousands of honest Canadians who are saying “enough is enough is enough of this group over here”.

So let us stop with the phony motions that we know are going to be defeated. Let us stop with trying to override the rulings of well constituted bodies like the Public Service Staff Relations Board. Let us have some real justice, some real respect for law, and let us have the government drop all this nonsense and go back to the bargaining table as it has been instructed to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Rocheleau (Hull—Aylmer): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak in this debate and more specifically to the motion tabled by the government. I am against the motion because I feel that what we have here is an illegitimate government that is taking away one of the legitimate rights of its employees: the right to strike. I think we should consider why our public servants are on strike. It is the government's fault.

Mr. Speaker, only last February, in the Budget it brought down, the government unveiled its plans for the next three years: 0 per cent, 3 per cent and 3 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I represent more than 26,000 public servants in the Outaouais region. These employees need the money they earn. They never wanted this strike. These employees want to work, but they do not want to work at any price.

Mr. Speaker, I deplore the present attitude of this

government which not only hurts the Public Service but also hurts the private sector because in this area, the private sector is affected by the fact that the Public Service is on strike.

I don't think anyone agrees with strikes, but in this particular case, I think the government has taken undue advantage of the Public Service. Let's go back to January 1, 1991, when members had their 4.2 per cent increase, when senior management had its increases, when the President of the Bank of Canada, for instance, had his increase, and when all the upper echelons of the Public Service had received their increases. The government has used only the Public Service, secretaries, low-level employees, employees who absolutely must work, Mr. Speaker, as a tool to increase its popularity, to try to improve its standing in the polls by telling the people, “We'll get out the big stick and beat up on our public servants and show them who's boss.”

• (1720)

Mr. Speaker, it is shameful and ignoble for the government to act that way. Mr. Speaker, they were getting ready today to table a bill for judges, who are people doing serious, honourable, important work, but are not the lowest paid individuals in society—

Mr. Lapierre: \$140,000.

Mr. Rocheleau: They earn \$140,000 a year. So the government decided to postpone this bill for a few days perhaps, whereas this morning, Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie and I went to support the public servants against this shameful action of the government—shameful!

Mr. Speaker, I have never been known as a union man or a left-winger. I have rather always been known as someone to the right, but when I see the government act in such a way, we must keep fairness in mind. They must act fairly, Mr. Speaker.

If the government gave the Public Service the right to strike in 1967, well, it should tolerate the right to strike in the Public Service! You cannot just take away the right to strike after one week, when that right was acquired legitimately, Mr. Speaker. If, instead of extending our sittings here, they had extended the negotiations with our employees, we would probably have gotten some results.