

Government Orders

Clearly the Canadian public has had it up to its eyebrows with Canada Post. Let us support this legislation. I believe it has to be supported. I believe we have to get the post office back to work, the union back to work, and this country back to work.

In conclusion, I therefore intend to support the legislation before this House and urge hon. members all to do the same. We must get them back to work. We must. We have had enough strikes in this country.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I think it is interesting that the hon. member who was just speaking said that we must get them back to work, that we have had enough strikes in this country. The hon. member might be interested to know that they have not left work. This legislation is being introduced pre-emptorily before CUPW members leave the job. So to say we must get them back to work is a little bit of an overstatement.

I would also like to comment on the hon. member's comments about the fact that these workers on average earn \$14 an hour. I find it very, very fascinating that the hon. members across the floor want back-to-work legislation after back-to-work legislation and suggest that these people who work for the federal government in the service area are overpaid. There is this whole mentality of being totally offended by Canadians making decent wages. I just find that is quite systematic of the whole attitude of this government to a whole lot of things.

The hon. member made reference to the Fraser Institute and Michael Walker, the guru of right-headed thinking in this country, so right-headed that it is almost off the spectrum. But Michael Walker is not the appropriate authority to be quoted with reference to how to run Canada Post. I would suggest the hon. member look at some very simple things and out of that reference to simple things, I am going to have a question for him.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers spends a full 25 per cent, and I will repeat that, 25 per cent of the union's budget on grievance handling. Canada Post obviously spends a pretty healthy sum as well. There is a backlog of 100,000 grievances.

Instead of going to the right wing guru, Mr. Michael Walker and the Fraser Institute, perhaps the hon. member can tell us if he does not think it is pretty evident that management and industrial relations at Canada Post are in pretty tough straits. The problem is not with what the workers are earning, the problem is not lack of competi-

tion, the problem is bad management and the inability to have decent and respectful industrial relations. That is my question to the hon. member.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I do not think we have to apologize for supporting the private sector on this side of the House because obviously it is the private sector that we are so concerned about. One thing that we realize on this side of the House, but I am not sure the NDP have figured out, is that the private sector creates the jobs, the opportunities and the wealth in this country. We have a high standard of living because we have a Canadian economy that works. We do not have to apologize for that.

I do not think the hon. member was listening when I mentioned the statistics: that 80 per cent of the mail that is going to be held up in this country is business mail. If that mail is not delivered it threatens some of those businesses. It threatens jobs and it threatens development. It threatens the kind of opportunity that we want to see happening in this country, particularly at a time when the Canadian economy has gone through a crisis, and there is no question about it. Just at this point, coming out of a recession, I do not think we can afford to have a disruption in mail because it is the lifeblood, the lifeline of business in this country. This thing is all about carrying on with Canada and carrying on with building a better Canada. We cannot do it with a disruption in the delivery of mail.

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask a quick question of the member opposite.

One of the things that he has suggested, which is not completely correct, is that this is back-to-work legislation and necessary because we cannot afford to have someone go on strike at this time. What he did not say in his speech is that there is no strike right now and this legislation is there in case something happens down the line.

I think the hon. member should take a good look at the legislation he is debating today. One of the clauses suggests that this is in case of a work stoppage or a lockout. I want to ask the member if he would answer two questions for me. One is if he as a member believes in the right to strike, and second, does he feel that this back-to-work legislation is going to improve the situation at Canada Post between labour and management.