

*Government Orders*

The Conservatives and the Liberals simply believed what the Conservatives had said and then they tried to convince the public of the fat and the inefficiency of the Public Service. Nothing could be further from the truth. They began the process which we see today with the cuts to the Public Service, attempts to convince the public that these are legitimate because the Public Service is inefficient and the private sector is much better. That is nonsense.

Through the years we have had tremendous loyalty and great service to the people of Canada, commitment and dedication from that Public Service and it has been very badly handled by both the Liberal and the Conservative governments, right to the point of the bill before us today.

The process of the cutbacks has been so deep and so devastating at this point in time that the uncertainty and difficulty in carrying out the tasks within the Public Service create a great demoralization.

Labour relations in the post office are catastrophic. There is systematic harassment by management. Thousands and thousands of grievances are dragged out on to arbitration. The privatization process is throwing people who are making reasonably good wages out of work and replacing them with the low wage category of workers on contract.

It is interesting how in many cases the Public Service and the labour legislation that protects them has seen this take place. Incidents from some of the employees within the post office who are very apprehensive about the security of the mail are saying that low wage contract workers have been given keys and access to a security system. Regular employees have been laid off and moved out. This has created an enormous problem.

I mentioned before the case of the Transport Canada employees on the west coast, the Canadian Coast Guard. We had a situation with light keepers on the coast of British Columbia, a tremendously dedicated group of people, who work in isolation, whose sole purpose is the protection of the travelling public and of mariners and aviators on the coast of British Columbia. That group owes a great deal to these people.

In two enormous battles, first with the Liberal government and then with the Conservative government on the destaffing of these light stations, automating them, turning those people out, those battles were won. There

seemed to be a political commitment that they would not in fact destaff the lighthouses. That is what the political end from the minister's office indicated.

Yet at the same time the operations side of it is completely replacing the equipment in the lighthouse system so that they will have in place the ability to destaff these lighthouses.

• (1610)

Can you imagine being an employee working within the bargaining process and the grievance process and having an absolute betrayal of commitments that are being made?

The interesting thing is the political decision not to destaff them. Yet on the other side of the coin they are preparing for destaffing. They are talking about technological changes so they can destaff. Equipment is being upgraded for automation, changing air horns to electric horns on the light stations. They are changing to a new type of light that is tremendously expensive to taxpayers and will facilitate automation. They are talking about reworking the radio system so that it can transmit automatic data from lighthouses.

Information has been dropped from the continuous marine broadcast reports. The barometric pressure has been dropped from the manned lighthouse stations but not from the automated ones. As you move forward on the issue the government has given a political statement that lighthouses will not be destaffed. Yet an enormous amount of taxpayers' money is being spent to put this process in place. Imagine how your employees are going to feel, or would feel, with that kind of betrayal.

There is another thing with the Public Service on the coast of British Columbia. There is a certain pride in providing the kind of service it does yet at the same time the government refuses to provide the capital equipment and the operating budgets to make these services effective.

It is interesting that there is a hovercraft station at Vancouver airport operated by the Coast Guard and there is another one in Parksville. The hovercraft station in Parksville is where my brother the hon. member for Comox—Alberni is the representative. He is working hard to retain that facility. However, the service is not only in his area but covers the whole northern end of Georgia Strait, which is in the area I represent.