

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

As my colleague pointed out, if the workers respect the law and the rules of the game, they will not be penalized.

I think the Bill shows how serious the situation is and we are telling people: "We are not laughing, this is not funny, those who are on welfare, the unemployed, the unemployment insurance claimants will no longer be receiving their cheques. You can longer abuse the situation. Such is the meaning of the Bill even if it is extremely harsh, and since it is easy to make comparisons, you are right.

[English]

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): It is Draconian then, you admit it?

[Translation]

Mr. Hamelin: It is absolutely "very" draconian. However, the situation of the poor woman in my constituency who does not get her cheque to buy food for the weekend is a lot more serious than the situation of a worker earning \$16 an hour. It is serious.

[English]

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): How about going to jail in the five years if they cannot be a union member?

[Translation]

Mr. Hamelin: Mr. Speaker is telling me my time is running out. Mr. Speaker, we have to consider the matter very seriously and I readily agree with my colleague that those are draconian and tough measures. We all will agree. However once again I ask you to appeal on behalf of our families, our small businesses threatened by the action of 23,000 against 25 million. Those are peanuts, Mr. Speaker. We have to be tough, we have no choice. Such are the conditions, and the extreme positions of the parties have compelled us in this case to use the necessary force.

[English]

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, this particular legislation was introduced yesterday at 11 a.m. I find it somewhat surprising that the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) has not yet commented publicly about this legislation.

As the Hon. Member will recall, when the outside postal workers were striking, the Leader of the New Democratic Party did not ask any questions in the House of Commons or at least my recollection is that no questions were asked by the Leader of the Party that prides itself on being the Party of labour.

Perhaps the Hon. Member can assist me. Can he indicate why in his view the Leader of the New Democratic Party has chosen to not yet comment on this Draconian piece of legislation, as it has been referred to by members of the New Democratic Party? Why is it that there is silence from the Leader of the Party that prides itself on being the Party of the working class, the Party of labour?

Mr. Keeper: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. That question was obviously directed at our Party.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Keeper: Quite clearly, unless that Hon. Member is just trying a ruse, unless he is trying to mislead the House, that question was directed at us and not at our colleague, so we should have the right to respond to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper) will also talk about that in his speech in a minute.

[Translation]

Mr. Hamelin: My answer is simple, Mr. Speaker: I fully agree with my honourable colleague of the Liberal Party in this respect. Everybody knows that the NDP Members brag about being the dedicated champions of the workers and the unions. We are aware that the unions contribute very large sums of money to their Party. For them, the notion of common good becomes rather difficult to grasp. It is a fact that they are placed in a situation—and once again it will likely be a matter of choosing a system at the time of the forthcoming election. And your question is to the point. These people will probably keep silent or almost silent during this debate, for they have been told that public interests override individual interests. Unfortunately, these interests are their own friends and associates, theoretically speaking, at least at the level of the establishment, such as some local lobbies. They are placed, therefore, in an unbelievable situation. But you are right, my friend: I am indeed anxious to hear what my colleague the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom) in particular has to say about his position on these negotiations. I want to know—and I conclude on this, Mr. Speaker—about the needs of the Canadian citizens and families compared with those of this little group of 23,000 people which are keeping the whole Canadian population hostages. I am anxious to hear about that, and so is my honourable friend, I am sure.

● (1420)

[English]

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks I want to deal with the accusations coming from my right.

Some Hon. Members: Far right!

Mr. Della Noce: That is the name of the game here.

Mr. Keeper: Let me make it clear that when our critic speaks on these issues, he does so after we have made a caucus decision and he speaks for all of the Party, from the Leader to the back-benchers.

Mr. Daubney: For Bob White.

Mr. Keeper: I want to ask the Hon. Member from the mushy middle, otherwise known as the Liberal Party, how come they stand up here as the defenders of labour when yesterday, when taping a television program, another Liberal