

advice, he used to try to assure us that insofar as the Post Office was concerned all was for the best in the best possible of worlds. Memory is a marvellous thing. I remember back in 1973 when we were having a vigorous exchange across this chamber and I was telling the hon. gentleman that if he did not move promptly he would utterly destroy the viability of this very essential service in Canada. He gave his charming smile and said, "Everything is fine in the Post Office; we are getting it nicely under control".

● (1440)

At that moment the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), who has also been resurrected recently, said loud enough for everyone to hear, "Everybody knows the postal service is lousy". So, even as far back as 1973 the government of the day recognized that there were real problems in the Post Office Department. They say that imitation is the best form of flattery. As I listened to the Postmaster General today, I felt that I was hearing the speeches which I made over the years in almost the same terminology, the same words.

I see my hon. friend, the member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), is sitting opposite to me. This is what happens to those of us who have been in the House for a long time. It becomes a case of—

[Translation]

The more it changes the more it is the same.

[English]

My hon. friend has become very conservative in recent years.

Mr. Knowles: Order!

Mr. Dinsdale: I remember when the hon. member had fire in his belly, for example, with regard to matters like closure. But since he has become a member of the Privy Council he has turned into a real establishment man and almost a real elitist and Liberal. Perhaps that is the trouble with those of us who have been in the House for a rather long time.

Mr. Knowles: What does this have to do with the Post Office?

Mr. Dinsdale: The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre asks what my remarks have to do with the Post Office. The Post Office is one of the most vitally important branches of the government service. It has been tragic for all of us to see it going down hill, notwithstanding the admonitions of successive reports commissioned by the government describing its situation. It has been a part of the general deterioration of public affairs in this country during the past 12 years, which I will endeavour to show through my remarks here today.

It has always amazed me that, notwithstanding the strong protestations from members of the House and the public, postmasters general refuse to act. I know that it was all part of the general deterioration of the economy of Canada over the past 12 years in which we have seen a country with both rich human resources and rich natural resources degenerate to a

Canada Post Corporation Act

position, in terms of economic and fiscal status, where it is now in a crisis situation with deficits soaring up to \$14 billion, employment soaring up to 8 per cent, and inflation soaring up to the highest level ever.

It is merely typical, and this is my response to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. This is why we should be disturbed by what has been occurring in the Post Office and in the House in terms of the breakdown of the feeling of consensus and co-operation, the decline of good will which is so essential to the functioning of this Parliament. I am sure that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre would be the first to acknowledge that this is the situation which has prevailed.

I would like to speak now to the actual bill. It is not only my speeches which have been copied and borrowed by the minister who just made his presentation, but the legislation pretty well follows the recommendations that we have been making in this House for almost a decade now. The bill on Crown corporations which was presented by the Liberal government back in 1978 was Bill C-27. It bears absolutely no resemblance to the bill which is before us today, and that was just two years previous. The bill was first tabled in the House on December 11, 1978.

Let me read from that bill to illustrate what it was trying to accomplish. It indicated that the Liberal government was still bent on its destructive program of confrontation in the Post Office. Here are the words of the title of Bill C-27:

An act to establish the Canada Post corporation, to amend the Post Office Act, to confirm certain orders and to make related amendments to other acts.

That was not taking the route which we had been recommending for many years of establishing a Crown corporation that would be distinct and separate from the existing Post Office Department, that would deal in a realistic way with the labour management relations that degenerated so horrendously under the drifting policies of successive postmasters general so that in 1978 we almost had civil disobedience. The president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers was jailed as the result of his defiance of the then Liberal government.

The bill before us today is the bill that was in process during the short regime of the Progressive Conservative government. The hon. gentleman from Papineau was kind enough to express thanks to the union people, whom I know very well and with whom I have had very cordial relations over the years, the Deputy Postmaster General Mr. Corkery, and to officials in the Canadian Labour Congress and others who had a very vital input into the present bill but he said nothing of his debt to the official opposition.

Mr. Ouellet: I said thanks to Mr. Fraser too.

Mr. Dinsdale: You thanked the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser), but you did not thank me for my speeches, so I will give some of them back to you today. Bill C-42 is exactly what we have been recommending:

An act to establish the Canada Post corporation, to repeal the Post Office Act—