

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

information about her illness and then berates the doctor for quarantining the woman and suggests that she should be going back to work immediately.

That is not the end of the story. Not only is there harassment, but absolutely unethical behavior of one medical practitioner to another. Then the postal administration decides that, even though the woman is home with an illness quarantine and is a hazard to her fellow employees, she can no longer have her pay cheques. Her pay cheques will be withheld. She cannot pay her bills, feed her family or pay her mortgage. Another form of harassment and intimidation. This goes on and on. It is the most amazing litany of anti-labour practices that I have heard in a long time. Finally, the woman broke out with active whooping cough and all was forgiven and forgotten because of course she would be an immediate health threat to everyone else around her, but not for the operation of Canada Post. The local postmaster was quite prepared to override a local doctor and jeopardize the health of other employees.

The question has been raised about the whole matter of incentives that postmasters and management are given for attendance bonuses. If they can get the worker attendance level up, there are premiums which accrue to the local postmasters and management officials. It is an absolute prescription in many cases for intimidation and harassment of employees. That harassment goes on. Those employees do feel the weight of oppression in that operation. This is absolutely unscrupulous labour relations.

The worst of all possible situations is of course euphemistically referred to by the Minister as the use of replacement workers. They are known in much wider circles as scabs. They are unfortunate individuals. The Governments, both right-wing provincial Governments and this right-wing Conservative Government, hold these individuals in absolute contempt. There is no dignity in the minds of the Government in the scabs forced into the job. They are told that they will be off welfare if they do not take scab positions. They will lose their unemployment insurance benefits if they do not become Conservative Government replacement workers to break the postal union. If they do not do that, then they lose their incomes. What is an individual to say when crushed between right-wing provincial Governments and the right-wing Conservative Government which holds them in total contempt?

So the workers are loaded on buses, swooped up in helicopters and held in warehouses, and eventually, the time comes to try to shove them through a picket line. I would point out that most of the people working in many of these post offices are women. In many of the post offices in the communities I represent there are five, six or eight women who operate those wicket positions, sort the mail and do the other things required to keep the community service going. They are not ogres. In many cases they are single parents trying to raise a couple of kids. These are the people out on the picket line who the Minister is talking about. The Post Office hires security guards to crash through these women.

• (1220)

It has been communicated to me by the people on the picket line that the violence started when people from outside approached the picket line and responded violently to those on the picket line and the situation deteriorated. Many of the injured were people on the picket line. For my money, these people were sent in as provocateurs to deliberately create violence.

Why would the Corporation and the Government do that? I suggest it is to give the impression to the public that this was a dangerous and threatening situation and the public would then support this Draconian legislation. That is the scenario many people in those communities believe. We had the letter carriers dispute and now this situation with CUPW, and the responsibility for the violence lies in the hands of the Government. It has created a situation which allows the Corporation to harass, intimidate and exploit not only the Post Office workers but the replacement workers as well.

The replacement workers have a great future; either go out and break through the line and participate in violence or lose your social assistance or unemployment insurance. Once inside, if you find you do not like the situation and you are out the door you cannot collect unemployment insurance. They are in a most disgusting and contemptible situation precipitated by the Government. That is a real fact of life for those caught by this replacement workers scam of which the Minister speaks so proudly. It is a typical program of the Conservative Government assisted by the Unemployment Insurance Commission on one hand and the Corporation on another. It is a truly disgusting act, despised by most Canadians.

Mr. Shields: You are unbelievable.

Mr. Skelly: Relax, Jack. The Minister talked about 1913 being a time of maximum franchising. At that time we had about four million people in the second largest country in the world. You can understand that anyone around then was probably prepared to participate in some way in a national communications system. Under those conditions it made sense to do so. It does not make sense to do so today. This is an attack on postal workers. The Minister responsible indicated that in his speech. He said the surplus labour cost in the Post Office is so high that we must save taxpayers' money and destroy the working conditions and wages of people in the Post Office. We will do it by franchising.

It is an old trick for destroying the union. You simply go to the private sector and say we have a problem. We are paying for about 4,800 wicket positions. We want to reduce their wages from \$14 an hour to \$4.50 an hour, about the minimum wage. We would like to put the wicket in the drugstore. Of course, the local Shoppers Drug Mart jumps at it and pays a little above minimum wage for a job that used to command a reasonable salary. People in the Post Office have the benefits of a union agreement which the Minister professes to support