

the Post Office is not a business, it is a public service. Imagine what would happen if we attempted to make the provision of sewer lines, water lines, streets and sidewalks operate as a business?

Mrs. Sparrow: Every city does it.

Mr. Benjamin: I do not know of any city that makes a profit on roads, sidewalks, sewers and water lines. They are all essential public services which certainly do not pay their own way. In fact, they represent a total loss, and taxes must be raised and paid by all citizens of the community, as they should be, to share in the cost of an essential public service. The people of this country want service first.

The Transport Committee just returned from a trip to Europe.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Benjamin: Incidentally, it is the first time that the committee has been able to travel outside this country in over 100 years. We had much more reason to travel than some other committees that I can think of.

Mr. Andre: You are always on trips, Les.

Mr. Benjamin: I wish I could catch up to the number of trips some of my colleagues on both sides of the House have taken. We met with the management, members of boards, presidents of companies and government Ministers from Britain, Holland, Belgium, Germany and France. We saw the airport at Heathrow, the Tilbury docks in London, the Port of Rotterdam and the airport in Amsterdam. All of us were given Eurail passes and rode the trains, including the Grand Vitesse between Paris and Léon. I wish we could give the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie) and VIA Rail management Eurail passes so they could see what is happening elsewhere when it comes to moving people.

However, in all of those locations, the question was put to some of these officials if they had any labour difficulties or strikes. Have you had any strikes? On every occasion, as my colleagues in committee will verify, they raised their eyebrows, saying it is inconceivable that there would be a lock-out or strike in those industries, all of which are of a public service nature. One individual scratched his head, I think it was at Heathrow Airport in London, and said, "Yes, I think we did have a strike seven years ago for four hours when the air traffic controllers went out". They have a system there, not only collective bargaining, but a degree of industrial democracy, that the unions and management both look upon a strike or a lock-out as a failure on the part of both sides.

● (1240)

Legislation like this that legislates in favour of one side over the other flies in the face of good industrial relations. It incites unions, particularly individual members of those unions, to take actions they would never even consider under a decent

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and fair system, and they have not been operating under a decent and fair system in the current negotiations. They have not received fair consideration from the Government in this legislation.

Let me rely on a couple of publications that are not known to be of socialist inclination, New Democratic Party propaganda, or anything like that. Of all publications, *The Edmonton Journal*, in that heart of free enterprise and free market force—if they keep going the way they are there would be good reason to call it "Redmonton"—stated on October 9:

Ottawa is using coercion where reason might have prevailed by legislating an end to rotating postal strikes.

In the process, the federal Government spurns the collective bargaining process and erodes the right to strike. It invites the Canadian Union of Postal Workers to retaliate in a manner that can hardly make the delivery of mail more efficient.

It goes on to state:

For its part, CUPW has shown sensitivity to Canadian consumers by staging rotating strikes instead of suspending all mail service.

Another great bastion of free enterprise and the market forces, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, referring to the services only being modestly disrupted because of the rotating nature of the strikes, stated:

The postal service was not a model of efficiency but it was not dramatically less efficient than at other times.

It went on to state:

Why the Government decided to move so quickly and so harshly to end the strike is anybody's guess. It certainly was not to benefit the postal service or the people who use it.

The eventual outcome of that dispute ought to be based on two clear principles: the postal unions have the right to fight for job security for their members; the post office management has the right to run the Post Office.

I do not disagree with that. The *Winnipeg Free Press* ends its editorial by stating:

The time might have come when the Government had no choice but to take action. It has not come yet.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the same thing applies today, five days after that editorial was written.

This kind of Draconian move was totally unnecessary. The Government has shown an unmitigated bias in support of Canada Post in order to put in place Canada Post's so-called business plan as speedily as possible so as to reduce its deficit. That is its number one priority regardless of the quality of service the people of Canada receive and regardless of the rights of the employees.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I have one question to put to the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). I believe he mentioned in his remarks that if we have bad management and bad practices, we are going to end up with bad labour relations and that it was management and the Government which were responsible for bad relations of the Post Office. I do not know whether the Hon. Member had the opportunity to read the latest book on the Post Office written by David Stewart