

The last strike I recall very vividly was in 1978. We in the NDP and this side of the House said that if we created a Crown corporation for Canada Post separate from the Government—and there was support among CUPW members—it would provide opportunities for workers to negotiate directly with their employer, that they would be under the Canada Labour Code and not under the Public Service Staff Relations Act, which limits the ideas and areas for negotiation, such as classification, occupation, health and safety and the whole question of technologizing the Post Office. Everyone, including the postal workers, said, “Let’s go for a Crown corporation and really establish an arm’s length relationship with the Government”. Let the workers have face to face dealings with their employer. That was done in 1981.

What I am seeing in 1987 is that we have not established the arm’s length relationship. We have not allowed the inside workers, the letter carriers or any other group of workers within the Post Office to deal with their problems. We had a business plan for the Post Office laid down by the Minister who is responsible for Canada Post, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre). What was the first and foremost injunction to Canada Post? Cut the deficit in some six years. By next year Canada Post has to eliminate the deficit. When the United States Government set up its post office as a Crown corporation, the United States gave the post office 14 years to retire its deficit.

**An Hon. Member:** How long did it take them?

**Mr. Binns:** How are they doing?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Today we look at our own Post Office and find that under the present structure it will retire its deficit by next year. There was a business plan implemented by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who is responsible for the Post Office, and given to Canada Post officials. We saw them, and Mr. Lander and his assistants briefed our caucus. They were great when talking about systems of moving the mail and all of those business systems. Not once did the discussion turn to people and the welfare of those who work in Canada Post to provide the service. The whole discussion was on the systems of management that have been put into place. We understand that, after all Mr. Lander came from the Delorean empire. We know what happened to that. He has now come to Canada Post and is talking about systems of management and efficiency, and not once did he talk about the workers. That leads to the next issue in this business plan, because that is how the Post Office sees its mandate to cut the deficit, and that is to franchise out the service.

● (1550)

The Marchment commission report was undertaken by the Government. There was a poll taken among Canadians for the Marchment commission report. It showed that Canadians are pleased with the service provided by the workers within the Post Office. Canadians are not saying that the people in the Post Office are not good and efficient workers. What does the

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Government say to the Post Office? “Cut the deficit by next year”. What does the Post Office do? It comes up with a new management system of franchising out. Of course, the postal workers are concerned about the franchising out of services. They know it means that their jobs will go down the tubes. They started off implacably saying no to franchising out. The Government and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) bring in Bill C-86 eight days into a rotating strike on the instruction of their colleague who is responsible for the Post Office. What do they really wish to do?

**Mr. Fulton:** It is like putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** That is correct. They are suggesting to Canadians that we should agree to allow jobs that pay \$12, \$13, \$14 an hour to be cut back and that we should give the jobs to people who are prepared to work for \$4.50 an hour or \$5 an hour. Five dollars an hour is \$200 a week based on a 40-hour week. For 52 weeks that is approximately \$10,000. All Canadians and all Members of Parliament should not be agreeing to wipe out full-time, well-paying jobs to create a series of low-paying positions. An individual who takes that job could not keep his or her family with dignity.

I wish to touch upon the fact that there are a number of women who work inside the Post Office. A considerable number of women, many of whom are single parents supporting a family, work inside the Post Office.

**Mr. Fulton:** Three-quarters.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** My colleague states that there are three-quarters, which is 75 per cent. Through their union they have achieved a good wage. The Government is saying, “No, we can get other people, mostly women, who can work for five bucks an hour”. That is what we are being asked to do. We are being asked to bust CUPW and to subsidize poverty wages. We are asked to contribute to that. That is why there is no way that I could support this Bill.

Implacably, the union within the Post Office, CUPW, said no to franchising out. It has since compromised, and shown that it is willing to compromise on that issue. It has said it is prepared to go along with franchising in areas where there are no postal services.

**Mr. McDermid:** Oh, gee.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Instead of snorting over there, you should read the reports that came out on the union’s position.

**Mr. McDermid:** I have.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** It is prepared to back down on that question. But it is not prepared to back down on closing substations of the Post Office and opening up franchising outlets in the same location, or near the same location, for a quarter of the wages. That cannot be done.