

Order Paper Questions

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of State and Minister of State (Treasury Board)): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is is agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

POSTAL SERVICES CONTINUATION ACT, 1987

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed from Friday, October 9, consideration of the motion of Mr. Cadieux that Bill C-86, an Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia) continuing debate.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, among the things said on Friday in this debate still ringing in my ears quite clearly was the reference by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) to the fact that the relations between Canada Post and the union are venomous. I agree with that observation. However, I have to add that the federal Government has a big responsibility for having allowed this relationship to reach such a stage. I will devote a few minutes to that aspect of my remarks.

What comes to mind first is the role the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) has played in this matter so far. He has certainly not helped. If anything, he has fueled the fire. Second, the introduction of this Bill has provoked the workers to no end. What we are seeing today is a situation where management and labour are virtually at each other's throats and almost waging an all-out war. In the process, the future of the corporation is at stake. That is a very sad state of affairs. Instead of calming the waters and cooling the atmosphere, the Government came forward with this legislation which is comparable to throwing a match into a latent fire.

Until this Bill was introduced we had a type of labour action, a rotating strike, which permitted the movement of mail. Canada Post claimed that 80 per cent of the mail was going through. Evidently the rotating strike permitted the public to be served. However, this Draconian Bill provoked the all-out general strike we are now facing.

The Bill contains measures which force us to conclude it is a bad Bill. The Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault) eloquently referred to Clause 11 on Friday. That provides for a

five-year suspension from union activities which could be interpreted as breaking the spirit if not the substance of the Charter. In addition, the Bill contains a directive to the Canada Post Corporation which leans in favour of the Foisy report. That is something the Bill should not do. If Canada Post has been given the mandate to operate as an independent employer, which it was six years ago, then it should not be told which way to go in subsequent negotiations, mediation and arbitration. In other words, the Government cannot have it both ways. It cannot claim that Canada Post is operating at arm's length from the Government, at the same time through legislation tell Canada Post it should be inspired and directed by a specific document produced prior to the legislation.

It is also a bad Bill because of its timing. It is important to put on record that at this time Canada Post and the unions agree that the operation of the Post Office will break even in 1988. Therefore we must ask, why this push to privatize certain aspects of Canada Post when we are so close to the break even point? It does not seem to make sense to inject such a contentious item when the parties agree that the corporation will reach the break-even point next year.

● (1120)

The issue of jobs touches many people. It is a highly emotional issue and has been mishandled by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. The fact is that ideologically the Government favours breaking the backs of unions and making their role in society extremely difficult, if possible at all.

You must have heard, Madam Speaker, about acid being spread on furniture within some of the buildings of Canada Post. That was immediately interpreted as an action by the union. Why would that conclusion be drawn when the workers are locked out of the plants?

It is also worrisome that despite its deficit Canada Post finds it possible to pay the scabs it is hiring to replace the workers \$150 plus bonuses. Why does the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs constantly interfere in the proceedings during Question Period? He does that at the expense of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux) who has to find a solution to this conflict.

If the Government were acting in good faith it would pressure Canada Post to pull out these scabs. It may also introduce legislation to outlaw scabs at the federal level. That move would create an atmosphere at Canada Post tenfold less negative, worrisome and tense than it is now. The union would likely return to rotating strikes which would mean that the home delivery of mail would be almost regular, as it was until last weekend.

By removing the scabs Canada Post would signal to the union its desire to resume negotiations in good faith. The parties are far apart and must resume negotiations to justify the calling in of a mediator-arbitrator. That would fit in with the development, for the long term, of good labour relations.