

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

and history shows that the sanctions provided are necessary because past experience of labour relations in this area proves that there is no other way. Without such sanctions, this legislation would be ridiculous and lack any credibility, as pointed out by my colleague.

I hope that the conflict will be settled responsibly, through conciliation and in harmony, in the interests of all Canadians. This is what we want.

● (1400)

[English]

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment, if I might, with respect to the comments to which we have just listened. It seems rather strange that in Canada the Post Office has been a constant source of irritation one way or the other, whether it is the fault of management, the inside workers or the carriers whereas countries like the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia, which have gone through similar problems, have been able to address them in what I consider to be a very mature and reasonable way.

In the United Kingdom in the 1960s, the postal system went through a series of labour-management crises, inefficiency, communications breakdowns, you name it, even though the system had a very distinguished history. But instead of privatizing the system, a system which was losing money, and cutting back services which our Government is proposing, the British Government, both Conservative and Labour Governments, expanded the postal service that it sold to the public. As the system became more efficient and brought in more revenue, employees realized that it was to their continuing benefit to make certain that labour relations continued to improve. Today the British postal system is almost free of industrial strife. If I am not mistaken, the postal system in Britain is making money.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa—Carleton): Good for Maggie Thatcher.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Second, in the United States the postal services are unionized. The mail is carried and the workers are making \$14 an hour on average. I read in the *Globe and Mail* just the other day that the American postal workers are among the most popular workers in the United States. The Americans are not privatizing or cutting back on services as this Government wants to do. I would hope that they would look at that as example two.

Example three, Australia, a big country with a lot of remote areas, a lot of uneconomic postal delivery routes, we might call them. Up until 1980, there was chaos. There was one strike after another, management was accused of being rotten, labour was accused of being rotten and it was reaching a point where the mail was really not even moving in some of the remote areas. People were literally not receiving letters or parcels.

The Australian Government, not under Labour but under its so-called combination of rural Liberal and city-oriented

Conservative Parties, brought in an expert from the United Kingdom, not a strike breaker, to try to bring the two sides together. He succeeded. The postal workers there are still unionized, they are still making a decent income, but they have improved the postal delivery system. There has not been one strike by any component of the postal service since 1980, and today the system has regained its responsibility and its respectability.

Those are the three examples I wanted to cite. Three different countries, three different Governments of three different political stripes, both right of centre and left of centre, were able to solve the problems of their postal services without Draconian laws such as that proposed this morning by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux). They did this without doing away with the system, without privatizing it and without busting the unions. They were able to do it, but those guys across the way cannot because they do not have the political will.

● (1410)

Now, I want to ask one question. I want to ask my colleague from Quebec if he thinks it is fair that if a union organizer breaks a law, he can go to jail and thereby forfeit any lawful ability to assume another job as a union organizer, either elected or appointed, for five years, while a cabinet Minister in this House can be accused of a crime, can be sentenced to a year in jail, we will say, and yet can come back into the House and be reelected and reappointed to the Cabinet. Is there any fairness in that?

[Translation]

Mr. Hamelin: Mr. Speaker, I should like to answer my colleague, first with respect to his opening remarks about Europe, England, and other places. If I may enlighten my colleague, most people know that in England, Europe and elsewhere the labour movement has learned one thing through the ages: a one-day strike is bad enough, it is extraordinary, it does mean something to them, and as a rule they stick to that approach. That is indeed what people of both communities learn when they talk to one another.

Perhaps ours is a land of greater freedom, I would not know, but it seems to me that in those countries people cannot afford to go on strike for weeks, let alone for months. But what I mean is that the climate, the sensitivity and customs are altogether different in certain cases. Over there, taking this kind of action which deprives people of public services for more than 24 hours is unacceptable, it is sociologically unacceptable, or nearly so. Over here, people could not care less. It is altogether different and, sadly, much too frequent.

In response to the second question, the history of labour relations in Canada is precisely what has prompted the Minister to take measures which, we readily agree, can be described as draconian, very harsh. History tells us as well that this kind of measure does not overly bother the unions, history has shown that, particularly in Quebec, sad to say.