

*Summer Recess*

people losing their jobs, as a serious situation and a threat to public interest. We do not want to leave Ottawa and let the government decide on a matter of public interest, when we feel that Parliament is a much better judge of the matter than the government.

[English]

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Speaker, I rise not to speak in this debate, but on a point of order. There are certain discussions taking place this afternoon in which my leader, the hon. member for Oshawa is involved which, we dare to hope, might be fruitful. I believe the Leader of the Opposition has been informed of these discussions. Because they are taking place, we feel it would be better not to speak at this time. I should like to reserve my right to speak later in the debate, if it goes on.

**Mr. Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth):** Mr. Speaker, I want to speak as one individual member of Parliament this afternoon and say that I am appalled at the government's attitude that this Parliament should rise for a three-month holiday, that this Parliament should walk away while the country remains in the grip of a strike which is so badly hurting the Canadian people. I find it unconscionable that the Liberal government should propose that we leave countless thousands of Canadians in a situation where they are deprived of a service that so many people depend upon for their livelihood, their jobs, their pay cheques and the welfare of their families.

How could a Government of Canada possibly be so insensitive to the welfare of so many Canadians? How could the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) make such an unbelievable statement as he did on Monday of this week when he said that he did not want his government to legislate the postal workers back to their jobs because he did not think the postal workers would obey that order?

I want to read into the record a commentary from a former colleague of mine in the parliamentary press gallery who is now a reporter on CFRA, Mr. Hal Anthony. On July 7 he said:

Canadians reached a plateau of sorts yesterday. They were told by their Prime Minister that the government will not introduce a certain piece of legislation because it wouldn't be obeyed.

The elected representatives of the people are running scared, afraid of a powerful and determined union.

The possibility of levying heavy fines seems to have escaped the government. The thought of sending postal union leaders to jail is enough to paralyse the Canadian government. If the government were to stand on a principle and say, "Having given the posties the right to strike we cannot now forbid a strike," one could understand that. But no, the Canadian government quite clearly is caving in to blackmail. The private and public sectors are already shuddering about their own union contracts should the posties win the day. They cannot be allowed to win all they are asking for... that's clear to just about everybody except organized labour. But the government is ducking the issue and uncoupled thousands of Canadians will pay the price. The anguish and economic hardship is being felt across the land, but the government backs away, fearful of enacting a law it doesn't want to enforce. It's a sorry day for Canada, and for all of us.

We could not agree more with our leader that we as parliamentarians simply cannot walk away from an issue that this government may want to run away from but that the people want brought to a dead halt.

I do not like to face the prospect of going back to my constituents and telling them that I as a member on this side of the House or, indeed, a member of Parliament on any side of the House, did not do the best we could; that we in the official opposition did not do the best we could to convince the government to be sensible for once, to public opinion and to listen to this very real expression of public concern. It is a widespread expression of concern.

I want to say right now that I resent an aside made earlier today by the Leader of the New Democratic Party, the hon. member for Oshawa. He said that we on this side preach the right to strike and then want to shut one down the moment a strike gets going. As the Leader of the New Democratic Party pointed out, it will be two weeks on Monday since this strike has been crippling the nation.

● (1540)

The principle of the right to strike in the public service is one thing. It is an arguable principle for some of us on this side, but it is now an accepted fact of life. A prolonged strike in such an essential public service as the Post Office is quite something else again. And we, as elected representatives, feel we should do whatever we can on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of Canadians affected by this strike. They may not care about the niceties and technicalities or the crucial aspects of whether one more body is added to the negotiating table. We think it is up to this House of Commons to get that strike stopped in the absence of successful negotiations at the table. I share the hope of my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), that maybe there will be some hope of getting the parties back to the negotiating table and getting a negotiated settlement. I repeat, if we do not have that negotiated settlement, it is up to this House of Commons to get this strike stopped, get the mails flowing again and to get into place some mechanism, some way of reconciling the right to strike with the chaos that results when the whole country is held up for ransom by the disruption of an essential public service.

I believe we have to think through very carefully about what services are essential in this society. But even our friends to the left cannot deny that the Post Office and the movement of mail is indeed a vitally essential public service and worthy of the concern of this Parliament before we take a three-month holiday. My opinion is shared by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. All members of Parliament receive copies of *Mandate*. We all take this group of businessmen seriously. The federation plea is "end the chaos". In one of its publications we read:

We're mad. In fact federal members are seething over the public sector strikes that so badly affect the health and survival of the country's small and medium-sized enterprises.

Strike after public service strike has created chaos.

Post office unions are among the worst offenders, but the strike, go-slow, work-to-rule mentality has, over time, tied up everything from airlines to police protection services.

In my view, the *Mandate* article has real credibility. The federation makes a very strong case about what happens to