

Canada Post Corporation Act

Transport Commission. This procedure is to protect the interest of the people and to establish the necessary arm's length between the corporation and the government.

The legal framework for collective bargaining will be the Canada Labour Code instead of the Public Service Staff Relations Act as now. To ensure stability from the time the act is implemented until the new corporation becomes fully operational, the bill provides for the continuance of benefits, as well as the rights and contract obligations of both the employees and their bargaining units. A number of provisions will make the transfer of employees to the corporation as painless as possible. Both officials and employees who have been part of the Post Office organization before the implementation of the new act will become the officials and employees of the corporation as soon as the act is implemented.

The bill ensures that the employees will retain the benefits that they have acquired while they were employees of the Post Office. The unions which had been recognized as bargaining units under the Public Service Staff Relations Act will be recognized also as their bargaining units under the Canada Labour Code for the first round of negotiation.

The postal employees collective agreements in effect when the act is passed will obtain until they expire. The employees of the corporation will have the right to apply for jobs in the public service, and ask for transfers during a three-year period after the creation of the corporation. That provision is meant particularly to protect the employees of the Department of Public Works and Department of Supply and Services who now work indirectly for the Post Office and offer services to it. We feel it is important, if on the one hand we protect the postal employees, that on the other hand we should offer some guarantees and protection to those who serve and work for the Post Office in other departments of the Canadian government.

Finally, the employees of the corporation will still be governed by the Public Service Superannuation Act; that, however, will not prevent the corporation from creating an additional system at a later date. There then, in brief, is a description of the bill. I feel, Mr. Speaker, that it deserves to be passed quickly. I say that with all the more conviction that I know two of the most important postal unions, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Letter Carriers Union of Canada will be negotiating their new collective agreement in the very near future. The current agreement for those two groups expires on December 31, 1980.

Obviously we would like to be able to negotiate those new collective agreements under the Canada Labour Code. We shall be unable to do so if the House does not approve, within reasonable time, the bill now before it. I remind all political parties in the House that they agreed, in principle, on converting the Post Office Department into a Crown corporation. I remind the House leaders, that of the loyal opposition and that of the NDP, that they gave the House Leader and myself the assurance that they would co-operate in passing this bill in

reasonable time. I would therefore be very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, if hon. members took advantage of the study of that bill to give voice to their recriminations, as legitimate as they might be, against the Post Office.

It is obvious that when this bill which transform the Post Office into a Crown corporation will be under scrutiny all members will be able to take advantage of it to talk about postal services in their riding, about certain postal facilities they would like to have built, about certain rural roads they would like extended, about certain new postal buildings they would like erected in their riding.

I can assure all members that in another place and at another time I will be prepared to answer their questions and receive their representations. The estimates of my department are under study before a standing committee of this House. I will be attending its sitting next Thursday morning and I think that these kinds of remarks and discussions regarding the postal administration can quite properly take place during the study of the estimates of my department. I would rather like the discussion to be limited to commenting on this important proposal to transform a department such as the Post Office into a Crown corporation and that we come as quick as possible to the clause by clause study of the bill in committee where we will be able to call in witnesses and study the various aspects of this bill which will ultimately serve the interest not only of the public and the Post Office but also those of the employees themselves.

I can say right now that on the government side, our remarks and comments will be as limited as possible and that I do hope that the two opposition parties will do the same. To conclude I wish to underline the fact that Bill C-42 is the result of thorough studies and intense consultations with the public, the unions, the employee associations and all concerned groups. All unanimously agree in saying that it is now time for this bill to be passed. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, I call upon members of Parliament to give their support to Bill C-42 establishing the new Canada Post corporation.

● (1430)

[English]

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back speaking for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition on Post Office affairs. I had this pleasure during almost the whole decade of the seventies when the Post Office Department went from bad to worse, and when I made impassioned speeches urging the successive postmasters general to do something about the deteriorating situation. In those days postmasters general were engaged in a game of musical chairs, there was a new one almost every six months attempting to juggle the various balls in the air.

Listening to the postmaster general (Mr. Ouellet) this afternoon, I am reminded that he is a resurrected Postmaster General. He was a Postmaster General back in 1973 when, notwithstanding all my impassioned speeches and all my good