

*Summer Recess*

permitted to point out to him very respectfully that, to my mind, his request is not going to help solve the postal strike.

In my opinion, the conflict will be brought to an end at the bargaining table. It is not the type of dispute which we will settle here on the floor of the House of Commons. The Prime Minister told him quite clearly, I said the same thing to him, the President of the Treasury Board confirmed it, and again today as government House leader I say to him that we have no intention of legislating the postal workers back to their jobs. That has happened in the past; the government has had to weigh, on the one hand, the right to strike and, on the other, the public interest, so that when the government did legislate in the past it was because it deemed that in the circumstances the public interest was sufficiently harmed to justify disregarding the legal right to strike, which is acknowledged and supported by the Leader of the Opposition, particularly at the Post Office. If the Leader of the Opposition is now against the right to strike by postal workers, he cannot say so more clearly than by demanding that we pass legislation immediately. I would ask him to give me one single example, and I mean a realistic, not a trumped up example, of the ideal moment when we would respect the right of the postal workers to go on strike.

Summer is starting. The postal workers are legally in position to strike. They have exercised that right for barely 15 days and the Leader of the Opposition has been asking us for a week already to send them back to work. Does he not believe in the postal employee's right to strike? If he does, when then will he realize that back to work legislation is not advisable if the postal workers chose freely to go on strike? Let him show me a realistic example where the right to strike is recognized not only in theory but in practice. I claim that at this point, in view of the time of the year, and of circumstances generally, though undeniably there are serious inconveniences which affect some people, a responsible government must look at both sides of the coin: the interest of the public on the one hand, and on the other the financial implications, the need for wise management, and above all the respect of existing laws and the right to strike granted to a union with the support of the Leader of the Opposition.

In view of those circumstances, when he tells us suddenly, at the very last minute and to everyone's surprise, that the House will not adjourn until the postal strike has been settled—I recognize that he is free to say so, and I do not despise him for it—I say he is mistaken. That in no way helps to solve the conflict, nor does it help the parties involved to get back to negotiations, nor does it help negotiate a settlement. I claim it is harmful. The present attitude of the Leader of the Opposition will do more harm than good if he persists in it. I have no idea what he will be telling us. Perhaps I misunderstood him yesterday. It is possible. Perhaps he did not want to go that far. I pass no judgment on him but only give my interpretation of the situation and my point of view; I do not believe that

forcing the hon. members to sit here in Parliament for one week, two weeks, will change anything in settling the postal dispute. If anything, it will hinder it.

We believe in the right to strike, in legal strikes, in negotiations and discussions that will bring all parties involved back to the negotiation table to settle this conflict in a normal and legal way. We are not of the opinion at this stage that it is appropriate to legislate the postal workers back to work and I say it again. It is not because the Leader of the Opposition is going to have 282 members of Parliament come back here or those members who are responsible enough to come back next week or in the coming weeks, that we are going to legislate. I am telling him, we have no intention of legislating a back to work order. He is making a mistake if he thinks so. Not only is he making a mistake but he is jeopardizing a settlement to the postal strike. He is jeopardizing the possibilities of a compromise and a negotiated settlement in this dispute.

If he really wants to be useful in the settlement of the labour dispute in the Post Office, I will remind him that strikes are not settled on the floor of the House of Commons, just as trials are not settled on the floor of the House of Commons, as I told him during the oral question period regarding the dispute over the election in the riding of Spadina. To each his own. Courts deal with trials and parties involved in a labour dispute have to negotiate a settlement. Some are free to make offers up to a certain limit, others are not, and if they are not satisfied with having to go on strike, as provided in the law, that is put to the vote democratically and with the support of the Leader of the Opposition and suddenly he turns against that practice. All of a sudden it's no. The right to strike is no longer to be granted, it has negative effects.

Strikes have negative effects indeed. But if he is against the right to strike, let him have the courage to rise and say: "I am against the right to strike in the Public Service, I am against the right to strike for postal workers in particular." Let him state it clearly. But let him not play little parliamentary games on the backs of parliamentarians, on the back of the media covering our activities, on the backs of all the personnel of the House of Commons—and they are 3,000 employees—and their families depending on our schedule, on our work here, and all of that for the purpose of scoring little political points and making the postal workers believe that we are going to force them back to work. We have no intention of legislating their return to work. All that he is doing presently, is jeopardizing the settlement of this strike. It is pure masochism to harm your own members of Parliament and also to infringe on the rights of members opposite. I am calling him back to his senses. If he absolutely wants us to come back next week, let it be so. As I told him, he knows the legislative program and we are going to be here. But we would prefer to adjourn now since we have been sitting since April, 1980, with our usual adjournments. We would prefer, naturally, to adjourn on July 10 after having passed 65 bills, after having reached an agreement on