

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

today. Therefore, I think it is fair to assume that any Member who wishes to participate in this debate will be here today.

I am asking for the co-operation of the House to complete second reading so that we can get the parties back to the bargaining table, prevent further violence on the picket line and get the mail moving at peak efficiency. Therefore, I move, seconded by the Hon. Minister of Labour (Mr. Cadieux):

That, pursuant to Standing Order 9(4)(a), the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of continuing consideration of second reading stage of Bill C-86, an Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The House has heard the terms of the motion moved by the Deputy Government House Leader. Will those Members who object to the motion please rise in their places.

And more than 15 Members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): More than 15 Members having risen, pursuant to Standing Order 9(4)(b), the motion is deemed to have been withdrawn.

Mr. Lewis: Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the Parties with a view to determining the amount of time necessary to complete debate at second reading of this Bill. I want to be fair to the opposition Parties and indicate that the Liberal Party thought it would be able to proceed to Committee of the Whole House this evening. The New Democratic Party was not prepared to give that assurance.

As I have indicated to the House, this legislation is important and we want to get the parties back to the bargaining table and avoid further violence on the picket-line. We wish to get the mail moving.

Therefore, I want to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 117 that at a future sitting of the House the Government will propose a motion allocating one sitting day for the completion of second reading stage of the Bill.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to talk about the incredible significance of the right to strike in our society. It is not my intention to speak with a sense of self-righteous sanctimony, but simply to point out to Members of the House and, hopefully, to people throughout the country that tremendous gains have been made by average Canadians thanks to the right to be able to withdraw their services freely.

I believe that we as a legislature should be extremely hesitant about trampling upon that right to strike. Only in the most difficult or dramatic set of circumstances, when the good of the country is clearly the dominant consideration, should we be prepared to override that right to strike. This is clearly not such a case. It is a case where a strike has been perpetuated by a Government that brought in back-to-work legislation at a time when it was not required, at a time when, frankly, it was designed to destroy the morale of workers and to make much more difficult the future progress of the Post Office.

• (1650)

I think it is important for people to keep in mind just three strikes that I choose at random. First, the Ford strike which took place in Windsor in 1945. It brought to my city and to the people who live there for the first time the recognition by that company that people had the right to form a union, to defend the union and to see to it that the union had a financial base for the future. It was out of that that the Rand formula eventually came which has contributed immeasurably to labour peace in Canada.

The second strike I want to mention is the General Motors strike in Oshawa in 1936. The strike led to the resignation of Liberal cabinet Ministers, including some from my part of the country, who said very clearly that when it came time to ride with General Motors or walk with workers, they would walk with workers. It is a sentiment which I think we should recall and recall with pride.

I think too, as we sit here in Ottawa, that we should consider the strike here by clerks which led for the first time in this city to a fair rate of pay for women clerks compared to their counterparts in the civil service. We have to recognize that strikes have been steps toward social equality and social fairness within our society.

There is a myth about CUPW, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, that it is some kind of renegade union which understands no discipline and is prone to violence. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, that as a Member of Parliament I visited the picket lines this past Friday in my City of Windsor. The people who work in the Post Office there also walk the picket lines. They were prepared to give up tremendous amounts of pay to do that. They are average Canadians, the sort of people you would meet next to you on the bus and walking down the street, but they were not people—and in this they were typical too—who were prepared to have their rights stepped on by a Government which brought in back-to-work legislation at a time when there was not even a full-scale strike in place in Canada.

I have to ask you, Mr. Speaker, and all the people in the House and across the country to consider what it does to the faith of men and women like ourselves, brought up to believe in democratic rights. There is no question that their strike is a legal one. Before that strike had even reached a stage where it existed as a full-scale strike, the full force of Parliament was brought down on their heads. What faith does it give them in the future? What faith does it give them in their government institutions?

There are a lot of issues in this strike. There is the issue of franchising which will have the effect of reducing the wages which are received by a lot of women, from the good wages received in the Post Office to the lousy wages received in many convenience stores. But what about forcing people in the Town of Lasalle in my constituency to travel seven miles before they can get their mail, whether it is registered or something like that, that has to be picked up at the Post Office? This is