

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

They refused. He accused them of insubordination, and it turned out that they filed a grievance and the Canada Labour Relations Board said that they did not have to do the work. It was a local manager who made a decision at the point. To translate that into an orchestrated routine of intimidation and law-breaking is extreme at the least.

The Hon. Member invited me to get involved in one of the issues at the table. I have deliberately avoided doing that because I happen to think that it should be negotiated at the table between Canada Post and the letter carriers' union.

I realize that the Hon. Member and his Party have certain obligations to Mr. Parrot and CUPW which require them to get involved in the details of the dispute and the negotiations at the table, but I think that is improper.

Finally, on the question of violence, I hope Hon. Members have not forgotten that the violence started with the rotating strikes before the Government had made any decision about back-to-work legislation. There was violence in Nanaimo prior to that. To suggest somehow that everything was peaceful, that there was no violence, and that the violence only started upon introduction of the Bill is in fact a distortion of history. I reported to the House about incidents over the weekend. It would have been a much longer list if I had reported on incidents all the way back.

● (1210)

The Hon. Member says that this new thing has to do with franchising and so on. I wonder if he is aware that in 1913, there were 14,132 sub post offices, all run by the private sector. The Post Office has never had as many as that. To suggest that the private sector running the sale of stamps is a new phenomenon is simply not true. In fact it has always been that way with the Post Office since it was formed through the Post Office Act of 1968. As I say, we had the maximum number of private sector post outlets in 1913.

Mr. Gauthier: Madam Speaker, during his speech the Minister did not in my view at any time address the Bill before the House. Not one of his comments was directed to the contents or the principle of the Bill.

Clause 11(2) in my view provides for a serious and a very difficult penalty. What was the Government's rationale for putting forth such severe, such hard and such regressive penalties?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I did not go over that, of course, because my colleague, the Minister of Labour did in his opening remarks and I did not think it was necessary to be repetitious. The rationale, I think, was to ensure, to the extent possible, compliance with the law. It had been used previously in back-to-work legislation.

I know the Hon. Member is not suggesting that it would be acceptable for union leadership in this case, or in any other case, to say they refuse to obey the law of the land. That

clearly is an unacceptable situation so the question then is, what form of penalty should be used.

As the Hon. Member knows, the Government he supported brought in back-to-work legislation in 1978. Incidentally, it introduced the legislation before the strike started. It was not passed until the strike was three days old, and the union disobeyed. At that time, Mr. Parrot deliberately disobeyed the law. Eventually, after appeals and so on, he served some 60 days or so in jail. That did not seem to serve any useful purpose, so this Government is saying perhaps we ought to look at some other penalties which will encourage compliance with the law.

I do not understand what is so severe about saying that a person who would deliberately disobey the law would thereby lose the right to serve in a responsible position with the union for five years. We are not taking away their freedom, we are not imposing huge fines on them, we are not throwing them in prison, we are just saying that we expect people in responsible positions to behave responsibly and obey the law, and if they refuse to obey the law and behave responsibly then we cannot allow them to be in a responsible position. I do not consider that too severe.

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox—Powell River): Madam Speaker, it is a severe temptation to comment on the speech of the Minister responsible for the Canada Post Corporation. His speech dealt with the question of violence. There is not a Member in the House who does not abhor violence, but the cause of the violence must be recognized. I would say that that cause lies squarely on the shoulders of the Government and the Canada Post Corporation.

The Conservative Government has done more to precipitate the violence in the letter carriers' strike and the violence in the present situation than any trade unionist involved in this dispute. The Government has created a labour relations climate that is poisoned. The Government has allowed the Canada Post Corporation to execute one of the most vigorous anti-union and anti-employee programs that I have seen in many years.

The kinds of intimidations that are going on in the Post Office today are severe. The objective is clear. It is to break the power of the union in the Post Office and to break the union. We have had very interesting examples of this intimidation raised. One I raised by way of example to the Minister is the case of a woman working in Williams Lake in a Post Office. Her family had been in Norway and they returned to Canada with whooping cough. The woman's doctor ordered her and the family to be quarantined. The local postmaster on the other hand said to her, "If you do not come to work, you will be fired". The woman of course followed the advice of her doctor and did not come in. The harassment goes from there. The woman is phoned at home, contrary to conditions in the contract, and harassed by management. The issue is referred to the postal corporation's doctor who poses as a public health official and phones the woman's doctor, extracts confidential