

Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987

choice. How would any of us feel in the same situation? I am certain that every one of us would feel exactly the same.

The union asked for a mediator on Wednesday and on Wednesday afternoon Canada Post said no. On Thursday the Government introduced the legislation. The union was then left with no choice but to discontinue rotating strikes and call everyone out all over the country. This is a most incompetent manner in which to handle this situation.

This Bill was not necessary, certainly not yet. The mail was moving no slower than it moved before. On average it takes four to five days for my mail to move between Regina and Ottawa, regardless of which direction. Some takes as long as 12 or 14 days. That reminds me of the old saw we heard when the price of postage was raised to 17 cents. It was said that 2 cents was for postage and 15 cents was for storage. I have often wondered whether, of the 36 cents charged now, 6 cents is not for postage and 30 cents for storage.

Every union and every union member in the country has recognized for many years that technological change and automation will reduce the number of people required to do the work and will affect their lives and livelihoods. They have recognized that for many decades. I experienced it myself as an employee of a railroad. In the overwhelming majority of cases the displacement and disruption caused by technological change and automation can be kept to a minimum through mutually agreed upon methods, to the benefit of one side and with the least possible harm to the other.

For the last 15 or 20 years the management of Canada Post has been on a union-busting kick. It has been determined to barge ahead with automation and technological change, regardless of the cost. It has spent \$500 million or \$600 to put in automated sorting equipment which did not work. Rather than taking two or three days for the mail to move between Toronto and Winnipeg, it took five or six days. It did not work. However, in its drive for automation it did not care and still does not care. I can only conclude that since the management of the Post Office has been hired by the Government, the Government does not care about either the kind of service Canadians receive or the kind of treatment the employees are given.

● (1230)

There has not been bargaining in good faith. The Government has approved the business plan of the Post Office, which calls for franchising without regard to provisions for job security.

Mrs. Sparrow: That is not true.

Mr. Benjamin: The mediator's report says that the inside workers who are displaced by franchising will have job security at wicket positions. However, the Post Office can simply reduce the number of wickets by franchising locations nearby. The employees of Canada Post are not stupid. They get angry

when they see through that kind of chicanery, and I cannot blame them.

When you have a good employer, you have good employees. When you have good management, you have a good union. The Post Office has not had good management for many years. Many of us hoped that relations at Canada Post would have improved when it was made a Crown corporation rather than a government department.

Relations did improve for some time, but then the Government became obsessed with reducing the deficit by cutting losses and cutting costs, even if that meant cutting service and mistreating employees. The bottom line syndrome took over and Canada Post brought down its business plan in line with the Government's directives to reduce its losses.

I do not believe that there is a profitable post office anywhere in the world, except perhaps Liechtenstein or Monaco. I understand that the British Post Office may break even and perhaps have some small surplus from time to time. Perhaps we can learn something from it. It also provides a far greater number of services than Canada Post provides.

Yesterday, an Hon. Member speaking on this issue complained that the employees' fight to obtain job security was an unreasonable demand. I thought the 19th century Tory mentality disappeared with the election of the present Government. However, I was wrong. Those social and economic dinosaurs are back in greater numbers than ever.

In my constituency, mail delivery takes as long or longer than before, whether it is to a postal box, through sub-post offices or even by door-to-door delivery. Canada Post attempted to close a sub post office in a shopping centre in my constituency. It meant that people in the immediate area had to go a mile and a half south or a mile and a half north to another sub post office. Within 48 hours, 4,000 citizens in that immediate neighbourhood went to that sub-post office located in a drugstore—which, incidentally, has unionized employees—and signed a petition demanding the retention of that sub post office. That must mean something.

The public relations official for Canada Post in Regina had the nerve to say that these people could take a bus. There are many senior citizens in that part of the city. If they took a bus it would cost them a dollar each way. Who would spend a dollar to buy a 36-cent stamp? Perhaps some dummy in the management of Canada Post believes it is a good idea, but the citizens of Canada do not.

In all my years of public life I have yet to find a single Canadian taxpayer of any political stripe who has objected to a loss in the Post Office as long as they got the service. When Canada Post delivered mail on a one-day or two-day delivery basis until the early 1970s, there was a loss every year. Canadians are quite prepared to share in the cost of the provision of the best possible postal service through general tax revenue. Of course, the objective should be an efficient postal service which could break even or even make a few dollars. But