

*Postal Services Continuation Act, 1987*

them: We are going to set specific objectives for you. You should try to improve the quality of service. We have heard it every year. We do not believe in it, but anyway, considering the quality of the service provided, we should not spend too much. Therefore, some objectives were set. And after two years, the deficit was reduced from \$384 million to about \$129 million. The deficit for this year might still reach some \$30 million.

Now, we are faced with the second conflict in four months and the government is again forced to intervene. We are obliged to do it. We are repeating our directive to Canada Post Corporation management. Being a para-public Crown Corporation does not mean that you should always charge more than elsewhere, that the service should always be rotten and that in fact, we, as stupid taxpayers, should always foot the bill anyway. This does not make any sense. It is not good enough and that is why the Corporation gave itself some means. In so doing, of course, it resorted to franchising and selling to the private sector. What are we getting in return? Every time that there are unionized employees in those units, 70 per cent of the revenues are raised there in order to ensure . . .

But where the private sector has taken over only 12 or 13 per cent of the same income is spent on that.

As you can see, this approach seems to make sense, and although we agree that the union members and workers of these firms are entitled to decent wages and good working conditions, there comes a time when enough is enough!

Why should their rights take precedence over those of Parliament? Why should their rights be to the detriment of the other needs of the Canadian people? That is what is unacceptable. As a Government, we simply cannot afford to let postal services come to a standstill.

As I see it, the rights of individuals are in conflict, and such rights cannot be exercised when they jeopardize the freedom and rights of others.

Although the situation has improved, I learned this week that men and women did not get their unemployment insurance cheques on time, for a variety of good reasons. Clearly a strike—general and total, or rotating—is a threat against the lives as well as the psychological, social and physical existence of these people. Other than their small pension cheque, their small unemployment insurance cheque, or other government welfare benefits, some people have no other source of income to buy food for the weekend.

I would suggest that a responsible government cannot stand still for long when faced with this kind of situation.

Mr. Speaker, Canada Post has twenty-seven bargaining units. I said: twenty-seven. So if every time one of those units demands—what could be more logical—changes in working conditions that are a threat to the whole system, we have a situation that gets so out of hand there is nothing for it but for the Government to react.

It doesn't take a genius to see what has to be done. When people put their personal rights and wellbeing above everybody else's, society can no longer function, especially when it depends on a service as essential as the one we are talking about.

Like my colleagues, I respect the right to strike, and the freedom to negotiate. However, there is a limit. We must consider the common good and the ability of Canadians to pay.

There has to be a place for management rights. Why should the unions dictate to the rest of Canada how Canada Post is supposed to operate? It doesn't make sense.

As for job security, I think that is guaranteed through attrition or some other method under the present system. These are just ploys to scare people. It is an attempt to give union members a taste for power.

Mr. Speaker, this situation cannot be allowed to last.

I want to ask my Opposition colleagues what their position and their philosophy is on the issue whether or not we should privatize the system as much as possible. I believe in this formula. We should adopt this Bill as soon as possible to avoid verbal and physical violence on the picket lines. The sooner we adopt this Bill, the better our chances will be to get back to a more normal situation where, all other things being equal, the normal rights of unionized employees in these bargaining units are not threatened.

We as a Government, and I think we have proved this with determination and perseverance, have a duty to manage the public funds with which we have been entrusted in the best interests of the people of this country. If you are willing for us to sign just about anything, tell us so. It will be the same as before. It will cost us the earth and will change nothing to the existing service.

It seems to me that this is not what we were asked to do when we were elected. People on both sides should be a bit more responsible and help to build this country instead of thinking only about their personal security at the expense of the rest of our society.

I believe that this is the main issue. I often wonder where our society is going. The decision we are making today reflects a choice between responsibility and irresponsibility. It is quite simple.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that Canada can long afford a shaky and deficient postal service. I believe that the objectives we have set for both parties are reasoned and reasonable, and they are already extremely costly. It is the most we have done as a Government. What is the alternative? Probably immediate privatization of the whole service. We shall not have any choice if this goes on, unless you decide to foot the bill yourselves by paying increasingly higher postal rates or taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I respect and congratulate the Minister of Labour for having made this decision so quickly. We are faced with an emergency. The Government had to act very quickly,