

Government Orders

post office closures in the last couple of years? Why have we seen door to door delivery stopped and supermail-boxes put in their place? Why are seniors, who at one time received mail at their homes, now travelling somewhere else to pick up their daily deliveries? Certainly, that creates a tremendous hardship and at the same time it created a great deal of tension between management and the employees.

Two levels of service to Canadians is a hallmark of this government's approach to Canada Post.

If the bottom line really were service, then it would not have taken the approach it has over the last seven years. It certainly would have looked at the situation of its workers and handled it much differently.

Watching seniors line up this summer highlighted in my mind the attitudes of Canada Post and this government toward the workers they employ.

I was questioned about the long lines seniors experienced and the difficulties they had in collecting cheques. In the 100 degree temperatures, many people were unable to stand in line over long periods of time and it was very distressing to these individuals.

• (1520)

I phoned Canada Post and talked to the executives there and suggested that CUPW had recommended that they would take those cheques, deliver them to seniors and make sure the system operated properly. The answer that I got back from Canada Post showed the difficulty that exists. Management in Canada Post suggested that the workers could not be trusted to deliver the cheques and therefore they were not taking action at that time.

The next day, Liberals in our caucus got together and discussed the issue and demanded that the government accept the suggestion of Canada Post and that the minister pursue what CUPW had suggested.

We then sent a letter to the minister and had a press conference in order to bring this item out to the public. The result was that the minister did act and accepted CUPW's request. I will commend him for that, but the minister should have been involved with that much sooner rather than sitting back.

At the same time, we made a recommendation to the minister that, instead of allowing this process to deteriorate as it had, he to appoint a mediator and make certain that the hearings on both sides were handled reasonably well.

The minister at that point again responded to Liberal recommendations. He came out that evening suggesting that he would appoint a mediator. It was two days later that he appointed Alan Gold as the mediator in the dispute. But I want you to realize that the Liberal Party is not just sitting back criticizing. We have made very positive recommendations as to how this minister and this government can move along with the process rather than totally sitting back, ignoring the situation and allowing it to deteriorate.

I believe that the mediation that has gone forward with Mr. Gold, CUPW and Canada Post is very positive. I understand that a little earlier today, CUPW gave Canada Post notice that it may possibly go out on strike as early as tomorrow. That creates another disastrous situation.

But the government seems to move step after step after step to add to the turmoil, the tension and the real causes rather than try to resolve issues and create a better climate for all to work under.

It is the government's responsibility to look at the causes of tension, to look at the difficulties and not just bluntly say: "Take it or leave it, this is the way it is". I believe that is why this government over seven years has developed such difficulties with all of its workers and not just CUPW workers. If we look at all of the workers who serve this government and labour across this country, it is very, very downtrodden. Jobs have been lost, anger raised and there has been almost a rebellion in the land. What is causing it? I believe it is this government's inaction to deal properly and fairly with the work force of this country.

It is important that this government take that on.

I will reiterate again that no one in this country, in the Liberal Party, in the Conservative Party or the NDP Party wants to see a strike or the disruption of the vital service Canada Post offers. It is the responsibility of this government to make certain that the tensions and problems that have generated over the last seven years are dealt with and dealt with adequately and properly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Vincent Della Noce (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State and to Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to take part in this debate, but I will not have time to make a speech and give my opinion on the subject. I listened