

Senate committee votes to save Canada Post from Harper's monster budget bill

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The Canadian Union of Postal Workers is encouraged by the Senate finance committee's decision to take a closer look at some of the items the Conservative federal government has smuggled into Bill C-9.

Among these items: Part 15, which would have eroded the exclusive privilege of Canada Post, allowing international remailers to handle foreign-bound letters and siphon off revenue to fund universal public postal service. The union has been calling for a debate on this deregulatory move, which constitutes the government's third attempt to push it through Parliament. Bill C-14 died when the 2008 election was called. Bill C-44 died when Parliament was prorogued in 2009.

"Big public policy issues such as partial deregulation of Canada Post should be researched, examined and debated, not rammed through Parliament as part of the budget bill," said Denis Lemelin, National President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

The stealthy inclusion of controversial measures as part of the budget bill has sparked concerns about the Conservatives' seeming reluctance to expose these issues to public scrutiny. "We think it is pretty clear that this government has grown impatient with the democratic process and that's why it is using shamefully undemocratic means to pass Bill C-9," said Lemelin.

Apparently, Senators at our institution of sober second thought agree. The Senate's Standing Committee on National Finance rejected four measures in the Conservatives' budget bill, including Part 15. On Monday, the Senate will vote whether or not to accept the finance committee's amendments to C-9, which could send it back to the House of Commons. The Conservatives are threatening a fall election if they don't get their way.

"If this government intends to erode our universal public postal service, we will fight it, whether in the parliamentary or electoral arena," vows Lemelin. "Most people feel the same way about the privatization and deregulation of our public post office. It's bad for us and it's bad for this country."

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