

Vancouver to Ottawa, this one six days from Toronto to Ottawa, this one nine days from Winnipeg to Ottawa, this one nine days from Moose Jaw to Ottawa, and this one seven days from the main Alta Vista Post Office in Ottawa to the House of Commons. These letters were all sent since the Conservatives came into power.

I have a collection of envelopes which were sent while the Liberals were in power. I have given members of my staff standing instructions to note the date a letter was mailed and the date it was received at this post office and to keep those envelopes. I urge that practice upon all Hon. Members.

This is nothing more than a symptom of the disease. The disease is the false premise that there must be self-sufficiency in the Post Office as recommended by the commission. As the Minister said today, and I am sorry he had to step out for a moment, this objective is endorsed by the Government. This objective is in fundamental conflict with the provision of equitable postal service all across Canada. We cannot have both at the same time.

Postal service is a national requirement. It is a required public service. As a result of that fundamental principle, self-sufficiency must take second place. I do not know of more than three or four postal systems anywhere in the world that break even, let alone make money. Perhaps the postal services of Monaco and Lichtenstein make money, and I hear the British and the Swedes are doing well, but in those countries the postal system sells a great many other services as well in order to provide fast urban door-to-door and rural delivery.

It is said by those who demand self-sufficiency that we cannot have a public service, a Crown corporation, occupying territory that rightfully belongs to the private sector, territory like the delivery of mail or the provision of savings accounts and drivers' licences. I can remember registering for the national mobilization in 1942 at a post office, but in those years everything was done at the post office. I am not suggesting that the same things be done at a post office now. However, there is a national need for door-to-door delivery in urban Canada and for delivery to rural routes and rural post offices. If we are to meet the national need, we cannot have self-sufficiency. The postal service might become self-sufficient once in a while, perhaps three years out of five, but there is no imperative in the minds of taxpayers for full cost recovery at the expense of service.

I recognize that my hon. friends opposite, including the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Assiniboine, are perfectly right. What is happening now was started by the Liberals. I am not arguing about that, I simply put a plague on both their houses. The point is we cannot have both things at the same time.

In a nation like ours with our geography, climate and distances, the Post Office will be lucky to break even and will likely lose money. That is not to suggest that it be given free rein and lose whatever amount of money it likes. Of course it must operate efficiently and in the course of providing service to Canadians in all parts of Canada, it must be efficient. There

is no argument about that. However, efficiency should not be achieved at the expense of rural residents, rural post offices or urban residents.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has said that there are no second-class citizens. In northwest and southwest Regina, there are people who are being treated as second-class citizens. They live one street away from door-to-door delivery. The situation is the same in every city in Canada.

Of course mail service must be efficient. It should be governed by a consumer-oriented regulatory agency that does not take into account current government fiscal requirements. However, there is no question that if we are to provide an equitable postal service, the odds are that it will lose money in eight or nine out of 10 years.

I have yet to hear from a taxpayer, a Liberal, a Conservative, an NDP, a big businessman, a small businessman, a home owner, a farmer or an old age pensioner in my constituency or anywhere else in Canada who objects to the Post Office having a deficit as long as it provides the service. If we do take into account our geography, our climate and the wide scattering of our population, then obviously the nation as a whole must share in the cost of delivering the mail as it has shared in so many other areas.

I spoke to a farmer from Aylesbury, which is in the riding of my hon. friend from Moose Jaw. I am sure he is as welcome in Aylesbury as a skunk at a garden party.

**Mr. Gottselig:** I used to live there.

**Mr. Benjamin:** I am sure he is welcome there. A farmer from Aylesbury said to me: "You know, on the one hand they are going to increase my rates and on the other hand they won't deliver my mail. What are they raising my rates for, whether it be for a letter or a parcel? They are going to close the post office in Aylesbury". The same thing applies to something in the order of 1,800 hamlets, villages and small towns all across Canada. The Government has to offer service first and self-sufficiency second. At the moment, according to the Minister, it has opted for self-sufficiency first and service second.

● (1740)

I am sure my friends in the government back-benches have gotten the message from their constituents: You cannot have it both ways. You cannot have equitable service and self-sufficiency at the same time in a country like this. It is not realistic. That is why I invite my friends on all sides of the House to support a motion which does not indicate want of confidence. The motion specifically says it does not. It does not condemn the Government. It calls on the Post Office to do certain things and that is all. Every Member of this House can feel completely free to express the feelings of their constituents. It will not serve as condemnation of the Government. It will not be a condemnation of Members who might not vote with their Party. It serves only as an expression of opinion by