

*Time Allocation*

The reason we are moving time allocation is that anything further to be said by the Opposition will simply be repetition. I already indicated that one Hon. Member repeated the word "Draconian" 40 times in his speech.

We want to avoid violence. Clearly that is the objective of the Government and the reason for supporting the back-to-work legislation. Furthermore, the majority of Canadians want back-to-work legislation. Why does the Opposition not agree for once that we are doing what Canadians want? Canadians want their mail to move.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** They do not want free trade.

**Mr. Holtmann:** He wants to get into the free trade debate. He will have his opportunity to do so. I suggest that Canadians might even want free trade, but they certainly want free access to the mail without controversy, fights or abuse on the picket lines.

**Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre):** Madam Speaker, I must say at the outset that it is a tragedy that the Government found it necessary to limit this debate rather than examine this legislation in a thorough and comprehensive way. Rather than taking the time to consider our suggestions for amendment, or seeking to change or even withdraw the legislation, it is limiting the debate and trying to bulldoze ahead. However, knowing the Government well, we are not surprised by its action.

I want to explain what the Government is trying to sell Canadians with regard to Canada Post. These days, politics is largely a matter of image. The Government treats the Post Office like a business. It is trying to sell the Post Office to the Canadian public as a business. Why has the Government chosen to do that? It is because, for many Canadians, that has connotations of efficiency, of being cost-effective and of providing a good service. So this is the image the Government is trying to sell. However, the reality is that when it comes to service, the Government has watered down the standards of service. Rather than working out how it could make sure the letters arrive in time, meeting the standards that are already in place, the Government has watered down the standards.

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It still takes eight days in many cases for a letter to get across town. Therefore, the reality does not fit the image the Government is trying to sell. It tries to get across to the Canadian public that if we treat the Post Office as a business, it will be cost effective and the best thing for the pocketbook. The reality tears apart that image because when the Government franchises post offices it gives away post offices that bring in the best revenue. A business person who is interested in a franchise from the Post Office is not going to take one of those post offices that are losing money. It will be the one that makes a revenue. So the Post Office and the Government are giving away revenue which will create more deficit for the Post

Office. This is completely contrary to the image the Government is trying to project when it calls the Post Office a business.

The point I want to make is simply that the Government is trying to sell a pig in a poke. It is trying to sell an image, because that is the nature of modern politics.

The reason the Government brought in a motion to limit debate is that it is trying to sell another image, which is one of the Government being tough, in control and capable of governing this country. Well, every Canadian knows that the reality of this Government is that it is completely incompetent and lacks the capacity to set a direction and maintain it. It certainly lacks the compassion to set a direction which is in line with Canadian values.

There are other ways of looking at the Post Office rather than simply looking at it as a business. One of the ways I would like to suggest is fairly commonplace but still important. Why do we not look at the Post Office as a public utility? Why can it not be like the Manitoba Telephone System, which is owned by the people of Manitoba, delivers good service, and is what it is, which is a public utility? It is under the democratic control of the community in which it is located, and this is very important when it comes to rural communities.

When this Government treats the Post Office as a business, what happens is that when that business is in a rural community, if it cannot make enough dollars to balance the books, it is closed down and the service is cut off, tearing away one of the pillars of our rural communities. So rural Canada is up in arms against the Government. Rather than treating the Post Office as a business, why not look at it as a public utility and recognize that the post office in a rural community is an investment? It is part of our willingness to preserve rural life.

It is not our ideal to have everyone living in a city. Canadians ought to have the option of living in a rural environment. The economics of having to centralize everything in the large urban centre does not make any sense in the modern context in which we are trying to improve the quality of life. This is the time when we should be investing in rural community life so that people who want to live in that kind of environment have the option to do so, rather than tearing out the roots of our rural Canadian communities.

Another aspect of looking at the Post Office as a public utility rather than as a business is that we can cross-subsidize services. In other words, we can be involved in those services that make a profit and use those profits to support the services that lose money. Not only that, if it is a public utility, if it follows public policies, then it can set national standards, which brings us to the whole question of women's equality. Why treat the Post Office as a business if it means that we will have to cut women's wages? Why is it that when 80 per cent of the people who run rural post offices are women already receiving low wages, the Government moves to cut back their wages drastically? In Wilno, Ontario, the Government is offering the Postmistress one-fifth of what she earned before.