

Government Orders

riding who have to drive distances in very heavy snow conditions.

When I was on that committee I insisted—and it is in that piece of legislation today—on an amendment put forward by the New Democratic Party for our Crown corporation to give equal service to communities of equal size. I will give credit to the then minister in charge of Canada Post, the member for Papineau—Saint-Michel, who agreed to that important amendment. It indicated that anywhere in the country where service was to be made available communities of equal size would be given equal opportunity. That is not happening today under this government.

I hear about the shutdowns of postal offices in small areas. I go there and hear the outcry of seniors who have lived in those areas for many years when they find out their post offices are being closed down. They are told they will be able to go to the nearest area, possibly 15 kilometres or 20 kilometres away, where there will be a post office. After shutting the first one down notification takes place that the other is being shut down.

There is no consideration for these residents whatsoever. It is strictly an economic decision being made by Canada Post. Canada Post is starting to let new private outlets across the street, right across the road from post offices, for the day when it will shut down its post offices in these areas.

We in the New Democratic Party know what that means for our isolated areas and other areas that are not profitable. It means they will be left out. Again we will see members of Parliament from large urban areas having their services, in fact even delivery to the door, when our people have to drive distances to pick up their mail. It is wrong. This legislation is wrong and should be defeated.

• (1630)

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate and to ask this House a simple question.

We are beginning to privatize what I consider to be an essential service in Canada, an essential service in the

sense that every country has a post office. If we look to the south it has a national post office that seems to work very effectively, and we have a post office that we are trying to privatize. This government has privatized. I will just mention two areas I have seen privatized that have affected the way of life of the people I represent.

One is the railway. We do not have a railway. Even if we had wanted the railway the Tories could take it away. They could just say they wanted to abandon the line and in a hurried fashion the railway picked up the iron rails and cross-ties and sold them. Within a year we would not even think there had been a railway from Halifax to Yarmouth.

What about the airlines? I cannot imagine in the 18 years or 19 years I have been involved in politics an airline industry in Canada that is more mixed up or confused than our airline as it exists internationally. The airline routes we hold dear should belong to Canada and should not be allowed to go south of the border in any way, shape or form. Canada should control its international airline routes.

Perhaps domestically we have a healthy airline industry but internationally I as an elected politician cannot see our international routes being held or controlled, our rights as Canadians being held or controlled by other countries. This government seems to have a *laissez-faire* attitude in that regard.

Then we come to the post offices. They were just closed and before we knew it some real estate business in the area got to sell them. Although the people have held meetings, protested and said they did not want their post offices closed, they were closed. Like many of my colleagues I have seen many post offices closed in my riding. I have never seen people more offended by post offices being closed. Yet this government has never once gone to the Canadian public and said what it was going to do to post offices.

The Tories have a majority. They can ram it through, and like everything else they do not even consider what the people in Canada are telling them on a day-to-day basis. I do not know how members of Parliament opposite can go home on weekends and face their constituents, unless their post offices are not being closed or it is