

Routine Proceedings

There is an incident going on right now in the village of Dalkeith in Glengarry, in my riding. The minister has been around Ottawa long enough that I am sure he knows where Glengarry is. He may not know the community of Dalkeith. It is not one of the larger communities, but it is, nevertheless, an important one in my riding.

Here is what happened. The Postmistress is no where near retirement age. She may be a few years away. Canada Post went to the Postmistress and offered her a lump-sum payment. In other words, they offered to create a natural opportunity because none was there. They offered this money, and I do not know the amount and, of course, I do not blame her for taking it. A person who is a few years away from retirement can always use money. But in any case, they actually purchased the rest of the time.

They gave her a financial incentive, asked her to retire and then, once they had artificially created this so-called natural opportunity, they circulated a letter to my constituents saying, "Guess what folks, your post office is shutting down because of the retirement of your postmistress". As a result they are going to offer alternative services to us. We will have a retail postal outlet, as Canada Post calls these things, inside a store in the village. There is only one store in the village and Canada Post officials went to see the store owner. The store owner then said, no way, we don't want this. We don't want to be the cause of the shutdown of the post office. We don't like the proposition and we don't want in any way to be associated with any such devious scheme by Canada Post.

• (1200)

Then they went to see the local furniture store. It is a small store where they manufacture furniture themselves. It is called Pine Teak and they have asked the owners if they were interested. At last report they were totally uninterested.

The present situation is that Canada Post has created artificially the closure of our post office without even pre-organizing another outlet. It is bad enough that they orchestrated this thing artificially. They did not even bother to see the store owner first and make a deal with him. We went from having a post office to having no post office at all and no alternative service in that community.

We were at a meeting the other day when they told my constituents not to worry, because they could always go pick up their mail and have postal services 13 miles away in the other village. If worse comes to worse that is what they will have.

Well, that's great, Mr. Speaker, that is going to be really useful for the people in my riding, going from Dalkeith to Vankleek Hill. It is unfortunate that those people who have these plans do not think them through a little bit better.

We are assured by the minister and by others that the post offices in rural areas are there to stay, but that is not always true. When we are told that post offices in rural areas are not shut down unless the postmaster is ready for retirement, it is not necessarily true. In this case, they created a situation where the person was made to retire years ahead of time. All the assurances we are hearing in this House are, and I am putting this gently, inaccurate and that is the best way I can put it.

The people of the riding that I represent want to keep the rural post offices and want to have a postal system that is not just a business but is also a service to the community. That is why my colleagues and I have issued a dissenting report to the document known as *Moving the Mail*. That is why we cannot support the government's idea and why we cannot support the concurrence motion proposed to us this morning.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Kamloops has just said, the member who just spoke is being quite mischievous this morning. He is having a lot of fun at my expense and I very much enjoy this kind of partisan rhetoric because he knows how much I oppose the direction that is taken in this report. I can appreciate him having fun at my expense and I realize that he too does not concur with the report.

The member is knowledgeable of the rules of the House. He knows that as a private member neither he nor I can move any motions of non-concurrence, or can put on the floor of this House for debate, at times like this, any dissenting opinions about the committee's work or about the role that the government is taking. He knows we have not had any debate in this House on privatization and as private members we have a great deal of difficulty initiating this. Does he not appreciate the opportunity that I have given him this morning to get a few words on the record about how much he opposes the government's work? If he does not appreciate the opportunity that is presented to him this morning, I