

Government Orders

The Canada Post corporation is also in the business of delivering something else which is not a dirty word and it is called service. What I seek is only a balance. I seek cost effectiveness in the delivery of the service but I also seek the delivery of service. I understand that as a Crown corporation it has a responsibility when it is owned by the federal government to try to equalize to the best of its ability, to try to equalize the level that is given, no matter where you live in Canada. That clearly is not the case now.

If the hon. member opposite believes that Canada Post just delivers letters and that is it, then he should talk to some of the people from Rural Dignity of Canada who came up here and met with his caucus. They met with the caucus of the New Democratic Party and they met with our caucus. They talked about the role of the post office in their communities. Every time they came and did that, it fell on deaf ears.

The other thing I want to say is basically that Canada Post offers good service. It is not the middle-level management and it is not the regional manager I have down in Nova Scotia. The regional manager has now been transferred to Toronto and he is one heck of a fine gentleman. He works as best he can with the restrictions that are put on him by the policies decided at the top. As a Crown corporation, the policy directive comes directly from the cabinet table through the minister responsible. That is where it comes from.

• (1240)

Mr. Horner: Oh, come on.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): The hon. member opposite says: "Oh, come on". He knows full well that when people are hired by Governor in Council they take orders by Governor in Council. He knows that is the case.

In conclusion, profit is not a dirty word. Neither is service, respect nor recognition for the great service that the employees, the men and women of Canada Post, have given to the Canadian public.

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member alluded earlier, he and I served together on one of the House of Commons standing

committees which spent six or seven months looking into Canada Post and its operations. It came up with a fairly comprehensive set of recommendations for the future of Canada Post. One of those recommendations did in fact deal with the privatizing of the corporation.

My own personal position is in favour of that for this reason. If Canada Post could be privatized and then regulated by an independent, third party agency similar to the CRTC and the way the CRTC regulates the telephone monopoly in this country, perhaps we might have more accountability in terms of the operations of Canada Post. Perhaps there would be a mechanism whereby communities, unions or anyone else in this country interfacing with the post office might be able to go to an independent, decision-making third party or independent agency which would then be able to regulate the affairs of Canada Post.

I would like to know whether the member would see any merit in that particular reform of Canada Post and whether he might in fact see some real good coming out of a structural repositioning of Canada Post as I have just described.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): Madam Speaker, I am quite familiar with the hon. member's views on this point. I believe he is truly interested in trying to have a more efficient Canada Post corporation.

I am not opposed to measures that would see a more efficient Canada Post corporation. I am certainly not opposed to any measure that would see greater reportability as well by the corporation to the Government of Canada for the people of Canada.

The current problem we have, as the hon. member knows, is that it is like trying to find hen's teeth at times to get answers out of the senior officers of Canada Post. Every time we ask them a question they hide under commercially sensitive data. We do not know what half the decisions are, unless we sit around the cabinet table.

The one thing I am against is establishing bench-marks of absolute profitability for every service delivered. It is just like user pay. When the government opposite talks about instituting user pay, it is wonderful if you are in an area where fees can be kept low. It is wonderful if you are in an urban area, but God help you if you live out in