

Government Orders

abetting the process, the over-all agenda of this government with respect to Canada Post.

What is in the bill? There is talk about some shares to be offered to employees, but we have heard from the employees on that and they are not terribly excited because they would be non-voting shares. The employees would still have no real say, no input in the operations of Canada Post. There has been no effective communication with employees of Canada Post to get their support for this proposal. That is why we have the statement to which my colleague from St. Boniface made reference a moment ago, the statement in which the head of the Canada Post union does not have very kind things to say about this bill or about the government's effort.

In my own riding of Burin—St. George's with 158 communities, the largest of those communities is about 8,000 in population. Many are much smaller. For example, there had been a post office in the community of Cartyville for many years. With the resignation of the postmaster the government moved to a rural franchise and postal boxes.

In the community of Cape Ray in my district, with the death of the postmistress who was a relative of mine, a cousin of my family, with the passing of that dear lady the government moved in again. Canada Post moved in and replaced a long existing post office with a rural franchise and postal boxes.

The same was done in St. Fintan's on the death of the postmaster. When the postmaster retired in Cape St. George the same thing was done. When the postmaster retired in Creston Canada Post moved in with a rural franchise and postal boxes. The list goes on. With a resignation in Burin Bay Arm the same thing happened. When the postmaster in Burnt Islands was promoted the same thing happened. In North Harbour with a retirement the same thing happened: a rural franchise and postal boxes.

• (1300)

In fairness, there have been two or three exceptions. I want to be candid and fair on that point. In Garnish when there was a retirement the position was staffed, as was the case in Rushoon and a couple of other places.

I see my time has nearly run out so I will not dwell on the details. Suffice it to say that in a couple of dozen communities in my riding in the last three or four years

post offices which had been playing very vital and worth-while roles in those communities have been wiped off the map. Instead, in some cases we now have the government providing just rural mailboxes.

At this time of year, in the dead of winter, with the kind of weather we get in Ottawa—it is not quite so bad in Newfoundland but we see some snow there too—or in Newfoundland, if people are going to approach one of those mailboxes they had better have their key in one hand and a blowtorch in the other, because the chances of getting their mail out of the mailbox on many days is very slim.

This bill is just the latest sleight of hand by a government that is very practised at sleight of hand. I wish it would leave rural people alone for a change and give them a break instead of socking it to them one more time, as it is doing in this bill.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to support the motions of my colleague, the member for Churchill, who basically wants to gut this bill.

The opposition to this bill is well thought out. It is based on an examination of the history of this government and its relationship to Canada Post. It is a history of saying one thing and doing the other, whether it is in Canada Post, Air Canada or the CBC. On one day the government says that it will not privatize Air Canada, it will not sell Air Canada. Then, lo and behold, it goes right ahead and sells it lock, stock and barrel. The people of Canada no longer have a single share in Air Canada today. It started out by a partial sale, albeit 50 per cent as opposed to the 10 per cent proposed in this bill. This is a first step toward full privatization.

I want to examine the rationale as to why the government is suggesting that giving the employees the opportunity to buy 10 per cent of the Crown corporation they work for will lead to better labour-management relations.

One way not to lead to that is by asking employees to give up part of their earnings and give them back to the company so at some point down the road they may or may not get some kind of return on their investment.

If Canada Post was serious about better labour-management relations it could start by dealing in a fair way with the 100,000 grievances that are already in process. There are 100,000 workers who have felt that the