

### Supply

rate increase, which should have been part and parcel of a larger consideration of rural mail service, should be here today asking questions about the kind of service that people have received over the past couple of years. It will only get worse.

What we have to consider is the fact that the deficit in Canada Post will not be dealt with by cutting back on services. If the last Government as well as the present Government had allowed Canada Post to enter such areas of service as parcels and electronic mail—and it allowed the experiment with consumer post to go ahead—the deficit would have been covered. Then the rural inhabitants of Canada would not find themselves in a situation in which their costs of receiving mail will be rising massively. They would not find themselves facing costs of hundreds of dollars in many cases to receive mail, all because Canada Post is trying to reduce its deficit somewhat.

It is just that type of large consideration of the needs of Canada, in allowing Canada Post to expand its activities rather than cut them back, that should be at the basis of a logical corporate plan. The failure to recognize the needs of rural Canada, and instead to be preoccupied with reducing Canada Post services while profit-making enterprises in the country make money, is an attack on rural Canada which back-benchers of the governing Party seem quite prepared to support. It is simply outrageous. My constituents are not going to stand for it, regardless of what the constituents of Members opposite may think.

**Mr. Boudria:** Madam Speaker, first, rural mail service cannot pay its way. If we are looking to make money with rural mail service, then I tell rural Members of the House to try to sell it to their constituents if they think it will work. It cannot be a paying proposition to deliver mail in a rural area. That is why it is called a postal service as opposed to a postal business. That is what it is.

Second, in terms of rural mail service and the type of service that it provides and the necessity of it for rural residents, I refer to my meeting this afternoon with the association of postmasters and their assistants. I was told at this meeting that in rural areas a large number of senior citizens still receive such things as prescriptions, food items and clothing items in the mail. They receive COD articles of mail. Those features of Canada Post are used by our rural residents. They are people who live far from urban communities and who need these services. Receiving medicine through the mail is not just a convenience for these people. In many cases it is the only way to receive the items they need. It is time we started to think about that. Some Members opposite talk about the fact that many things have changed, as if having a postal service were mere nostalgia. It is not that. It is something that we need and it is something that the people want. They have every right to expect that they should receive it from the Government.

**Mr. McKenzie:** Madam Speaker, I have some comments to make. I do not know where the Hon. Member was, or other members of the Liberal Party, when they let the Post Office run down to such a degree. We inherited this mess from the

Liberal Government. The corporation under the Liberal Government did not invest in capital assets, therefore creating the situation that this Government is addressing. The age of the transportation fleet is almost twice the optimum for transportation companies. No significant investment was made in sorting equipment. Some of it is 30 years old. So we have to find the money to buy new sorting equipment. Why did the Liberal Party when in government not buy new sorting equipment? This Government is making a major equity investment in this and the next fiscal year to improve capital base and consequently improve the level of postal service.

It was the Liberal Government while Canada Post was still a Department which negotiated agreements with unions that have reduced management operational efficiency and set a wage rate for union members which is out of line with wages paid in the private sector. The settlements to which they agreed are the major reason Canada Post is in financial difficulty.

I want to point out to you, Madam Speaker, that we are dealing with this. The Canada Labour Relations Board is working with the unions and Canada Post to reduce the number of unions, which has caused serious operational problems for Canada Post. There are about 29 collective agreements. I hear some mumbling from members of the NDP. The unions agree that they do not need as many collective agreements and they agree that we do not need umpteen different unions in Canada Post. We are working on that problem and we are taking decisive action. We are not ignoring the problems like the Liberals did for all the years they were in power.

● (1730)

Why was this mess created? If Liberals are so smart, know everything and have all the answers, why did they not implement all their brainwaves when they were in power? It is ludicrous for them to be criticizing Canada Post now and for them to be criticizing us for taking positive action, something they should have done but have neglected to do in the 20 years they were in power.

**Mr. Boudria:** I cannot respond? I would have loved to.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne):** The time is over. Resuming debate.

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West):** Madam Speaker, I have followed today's debate very closely. I have heard a litany of complaints about the postal service for a number of years. I do not intend to spend much time talking about details. However, I would mention, after hearing the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie) complain about what the Liberals did, that over the last few years, I have been collecting envelopes. I have here a handful of envelopes, the last group I received.

If one wanted to complain about Canada Post, one could talk about these envelopes. This one took 10 days to go from