

Government Orders

I attended numerous meetings in my riding with representatives of Canada Post when they were there to tell their good news to the people. The news was that they were going to lose their post office and they would be much better off. I tried at several of these meetings to get through to these PR people that the sovereignty of this nation resides in the people of the nation. It does not reside in Canada Post.

One might as well have been talking to the wall because these automatons were programmed. They were not allowed to say anything they had not been told in their little booklet to say. Naturally, the people were seized with a great deal of anger.

In one situation, in the little village of Loggieville, the community wanted to take over the post office and run it. They were not even allowed to do that. It would have cost Canada Post nothing. But somebody in Ottawa had decided that rural Canada was not worth what the postal service was giving. It has been destroyed in my opinion and it will take a long time for the people in these rural areas to forgive this government for what it has done.

I repeat that the sovereignty of the nation resides in the people of this country. It does not reside in cabinet. It does not reside in this Chamber. It resides in the people. It is time for this government to stop trying to be the dictator of Canada, start listening to what the people have to say and give the people as much as possible the benefits and services they need.

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to participate in this debate on behalf of the constituents of Cardigan, Prince Edward Island.

Bill C-73 is an act to amend the Canada Post Act. It should be called the selling out the post office act. The bill is just another example of the government trying to do things through the back door. The government should come clean with the people of Canada and call a spade a spade. This bill is going to privatize the post office.

The government says it only wants to improve productivity and service to the public. Let us take a look at the record of service this government has had when handling Canada Post.

Since the Tories came to power hundreds of post offices have closed down. Many small towns across the country have lost the only government presence they had. People do not mind paying taxes if they see some benefit for paying them. What is the benefit in going to a drugstore miles down the road to get your mail? For most rural Canadians, the post office was the only place where they regularly saw the Canadian flag. By closing down the post office, the government has removed that.

Two years ago on Prince Edward Island, Saturday rural mail delivery was eliminated. The government said the move was to rationalize the service. In 1982, when the post office was made a Crown corporation, it was felt that Prince Edward Island had special needs requiring mail to be delivered on Saturday.

From 1982 to 1990 there have not been all that many changes on Prince Edward Island but the government no longer felt we needed Saturday rural mail service. That move has inconvenienced many people, particularly senior citizens. For older people living a number of miles out in the country, it means that most likely they will not get a daily paper. As a result of the cuts, the post office lost a huge contract for delivering the newspapers. Instead of improving the service, it has gone down in Prince Edward Island. Canada Post actually lost dollars at the time by removing Saturday mail delivery, just for efficiency.

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The last slap in the face to islanders came last December. That is when the post office decided it would no longer sort in Charlottetown the mail from communities in Prince Edward Island to places off the island. Off-mail now gets processed in Halifax. This has caused delays in the mail system, especially UI cheques which must be mailed on specific days to be processed properly.

I wonder if the members and the government realize what it really is to be on a low fixed income and to be waiting for your unemployment insurance cheque. The people need these cheques. They do not have another account to go to if the cheque does not come on Thursday and instead it comes on Monday. That hurts. It hurts the people in Prince Edward Island. That is about all that this service has done.