

*Government Orders*

and sleigh delivering rural mail in the winter months. Let me tell you the mail always did go through.

I can say that in many instances we would post a letter and three days later we would have a reply back from London or Toronto because that mail was taken to the post offices. It was sorted *en route* to Toronto on the mail cars in the trains. You could not get anything much more efficient than that and there would be a reply back in three days. It is a far cry from that today.

I am alarmed even more at what has been happening as the post office routes are amalgamated and one contractor maybe has five or six routes. Most of the former postmasters of those small towns and villages were veterans who were deserving of the position and had the respect of their communities, having previously served our country. Of course they and their rural carriers were bonded but that is no longer a requirement for the contractor today.

If, for example, a contractor in making the rounds decided to stop at a bingo hall to play bingo for an hour and a half and left the mail sitting unattended in his vehicle, who would be responsible and who would reprimand him? As far as Canada Post is concerned, as long as the mail is delivered that day that is all that seems to matter.

Most of these little post offices did show a profit and provided excellent services. Now Canada Post is going to sell shares to the employees to try to get them to co-operate after we slash thousands of jobs and close down thousands upon thousands of post offices.

As we look at the numbers that are closed already and the impact that this has had, it is really in effect closing down the focal point of the communities across rural Canada. Looking at the lists I have from the various provinces on February 3, 1993, there are still 376 more to close in Ontario alone. Having come through this process let me say that it is very humiliating. I do not blame the people in the communities for being incensed whatsoever.

• (1715)

In the village of Watford, Ontario, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 172 was concerned about the future of the cenotaph in the village. I was very embarrassed last fall at the Remembrance Day services in front of the cenotaph. The post office beside the cenotaph was closed but there was a tattered Canadian flag flying. Nobody

through Canada Post had seen fit to replace it until a letter of complaint went to the minister.

We still do not know what is going to happen to that cenotaph if that post office is sold. We have been getting the run-around now for two years. It has been two years since I spoke in the House on this. I was incensed at that time and I still am. I listened to the so-called explanations being given by officials at Canada Post when they came into the community to try to sell them on privatization or retail outlets.

I think back to the time the reeve of the town of Newbury stood up to them and refused to budge. The village itself took over the operation of that post office. The village is doing an excellent job and the post office is still the focal point of that community. It is not a faceless community. It is a booming little community that still has a post office run by the village itself.

In the process of those negotiations Canada Post officials pointed out that it was not acceptable and it was not done. Municipalities were not allowed to run their own post offices. They started digging into it and found that indeed municipalities do run their own post offices in other parts of Canada. Diane Brewer, the reeve of the municipality, showed they were wrong and was able to force them to deal with the municipality. Everything is going extremely well as far as the municipality is concerned, but of course it has put a crimp in the style of Canada Post.

I sat in on several of these meetings or had a representative there. We saw the harsh, insensitive tactics used during these closing procedures when the villagers were assured they would have the type of service they were used to over the years.

The post office cannot be replaced in any community regardless of where it is because of the sense of being Canadian, the sense of pride in being Canadian that we have rekindled. It is one more step toward the death-knell of rural Canada to proceed in the direction such as we see today.

I oppose this bill. I oppose it because of the proud traditions we have had in Canada, the sense of pride that I spoke about, the tremendous service the post offices have given us over the years.

Now they are losing money, not through any fault of local employees, but because they are trying to modernize what has already been very efficient, by laying off the workers at the low end of the scale and hiring more