

Government Orders

• (1620)

So this privatization will not solve the problem there. Just giving it to the private sector will certainly not solve the problem, since we have seen that the private sector is not always the answer. We have inherited a system that was built over the years. At one time it was envied by many. Now the government comes up with what it hopes is a solution to all these conflicts. Basically privatization puts the problem out of our control. That is not the way to go. We should always have control over Canada Post because it is extremely important to have a service that meets the objectives of providing the fastest, most reliable service possible. We had such a service and that is still our goal but I think that we would still have the same problems with privatization and then we would conclude that privatization was not the solution.

In closing, I hope that in the next few years, we will really take the time to deal with the postal question and settle it once and for all. We should ask those who have been out there for many years and call upon their knowledge to find a way that will benefit all Canadians and give them fast, reliable service.

[*English*]

Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, I too wish to enter into the debate on Bill C-73, an act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act. This is nothing more than the privatization of Canada Post.

I listened with interest to the member for Ottawa West. I was the New Democratic Party postal critic during 1980, 1981 and 1982 when Canada Post was made a Crown corporation. During that time the Liberals were in power.

In the small community of Trout Lake just south of my then riding of Kootenay East—Revelstoke, which has now been changed to Kootenay East, a very strong Liberal who had worked for the Liberal Party for many years was delivering the mail. The people were being told that their rural post office in Trout Lake was to be shut down and that they would have to travel approximately 20 miles to a green box at Galena Bay. That was the concern of the Liberals in those days. As a member of Parliament I hired a lawyer to try to fight that, and the minute I did so they changed their decision and let that post office carry on. I do not need to be told anything about what the Liberals were doing with regard to the post office even in those days.

As I said I represent the riding of Kootenay East with nine municipalities and 50 rural post offices. When I see the Liberal member of Parliament for Ottawa West standing in the House expressing concerns with regard to the possibility that she might not be able to receive her mail in French or English or the possibility of some of these changes taking place, I think such members of Parliament have no idea what a member of Parliament in a rural riding must do in order to try to accommodate and work for his or her residents.

Of 50 rural post offices many are being shut down. People are being told to drive as many as 30 kilometres and 40 kilometres to a green box where there are no other services available. Right across the street from the post office we have in place with all its services the government in power is opening up another private enterprise and making those services available. Yet, as I said, people in a rural area will have to drive 30 kilometres or 40 kilometres to get to a green box in snow up to their hips.

• (1625)

This is not the kind of service that we in the New Democratic Party envisioned for our people. Our post office is one of the most essential services people expect to have. It must be equal for everyone across all provinces, across our whole country and especially into our rural areas. Private enterprise will not go into remote areas and give the kinds of services people expect. If we are talking about services we have to retain our Crown corporation. We have to retain equal service to people right across the country and we are not going to do that with this kind of legislation.

I resent being a member of Parliament when I hear what people representing a riding like Ottawa West have to say. I have five airports in my riding and I am trying to get some electric lighting for them. I have five native bands in my riding and I am trying to get some help for them. I have three border crossings and we have the kind of legislation this government brought in to try to protect small businesses in those areas. I have 1,400 kilometres to drive across my riding to represent these people.

The government is taking away our immigration offices. It is cutting back on our unemployment insurances offices. I cannot even have a 1-800 number for those people to phone when they have problems with their unemployment insurance. Yet I hear the Liberal member for Ottawa West complaining whether they can get their mail in French or in English. I am complaining so that we can get a service to represent the people in my