

Government Orders

the post offices alive and operating in rural Canada. They want Canada Post and the government to come clean and acknowledge the importance of these post offices instead of putting forward legislation like this that is designed to disguise another intention completely.

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak to Bill C-73, a bill to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act.

Most of my colleagues have already touched on the obvious concerns we have with respect to this legislation, but let us be really truthful with Canadians and tell them what this bill does and does not do.

The government is not really serious about dealing with the real issues of Canada Post and there are many. We all know them because we hear from our constituents who are sometimes not very pleased with the service. We hear from employees who tell us things are not as they should be in the Crown corporation. Yet the government proposes four measly pages of amendments to Canada Post which deal with only one aspect of the Crown corporation, to allow employees the opportunity to buy into the Crown corporation that Canadians already own.

• (1345)

I am not sure that is the real issue Canadians have with Canada Post, at least the ones I have spoken to. Canada Post is owned by Canadians. It is a Crown corporation 100 per cent owned by the government and therefore owned by Canadians.

If Canadians had an opportunity to sit on the board of directors of Canada Post, I think they would try to tell the government and management who initiate the directions of Canada Post that service is the key concern of Canadians, whether they live in urban centres, small towns or rural Canada. Even the parliamentary committees of this House have tried to deal with this issue.

The small business community needs to be reassured that the Crown corporation is dedicated to moving the mail so it can deal with its businesses. We know what has happened in the past number of years. There has not been a great vote of confidence by Canadians in Canada Post. Businesses and people have looked elsewhere to

other corporations and businesses for exactly the kind of service Canada Post is meant to give.

Unfortunately, I am not sure the government is dealing with the real issues of the day in its relations with Canada Post. It is a sham that it put four pages forth. I guess there is nothing wrong with an employee purchase plan. It is a new way to bring employees into the corporation. But employees must be more involved than just having the opportunity to purchase shares in the corporation without the benefits of ownership of those shares. When one buys shares in a company, one should have a say at the table in how the corporation is run.

They are not voting shares that the employees would buy. The bill does not talk about the purchase or the value of the shares, the assets of the corporation. How will it distribute dividends and profits? This is something most investors and shareholders would want to know before they invested.

I am not sure this bill even defines what an employee is. It may not be an opportunity to buy shares but a bonus plan for management and executives.

I think Canada Post ought to deal with the real issues of postal delivery in this country. As my colleagues on this side have indicated, it should not prepare another Crown corporation for privatization. We have seen it. We saw the closures of postal offices across the country in rural Canada and small towns. We saw the decimation of services in urban centres. Most new homes now receive their mail at community mailboxes.

We have set up different classes of citizenship in this country as they relate to postal service. If you were lucky enough two or three years ago to own an older home, mail delivery is at the door. If you recently bought a new home, you now have to go to a community mailbox to get your mail. I am not sure that is equal service. The act calls for equal service to all Canadians.

Winter conditions in the months of December, January and February make it very difficult for those with community mailboxes to turn their keys in those small locks. They are supposed to be foolproof. There are not supposed to be any problems getting into the boxes, but that is a lot of bunk. We all know that. If you do not, come to London, Ontario, and try to get into mine. See if