

The realm of postal service, including long distance delivery and couriers, has changed a great deal since those years. Here in Canada, our postal service has gone through many struggles to emerge as a highly efficient, dynamic and competitive service, delivering millions of pieces of mail each day through the efficient, cooperative effort of thousands and thousands of hard-working and devoted public servants.

Certainly, one of our great cultural figures is our most common and regular contact with the post office: the postie, as he or she is sometimes called, or the public servant who actually delivers the mail to our homes.

Honourable senators, for a different perspective and deeper understanding of just how efficient Canada Post is, I recommend to honourable senators, and any others invited, to accept Canada Post's invitation to witness the action — and it is action — at its early morning national control centre right here in Ottawa. If you want to go and see it for yourselves, I will put the information on the record so you can consult it. The contact person is Mr. Antoine Normand — at the time I went it was John Ferguson — at 734-7574. He is the corporation manager of communications at Canada Post.

What happened in my case is that they came and picked me up at about a quarter to 8 in the morning, and we went out to Tunney's Pasture, I think it is. You go in and see Mr. Donald Lander in his office for about five minutes, and then you go into a large room. I do not know whether any of you have been there. You enter this huge room where the basic set-up is round, and where a woman stands at a podium with a microphone. It is a big room. I would say it has probably as much space as this Senate chamber, but it is circular in shape. All of the postal heads of services and so on are there, like the United Nations, with their advisors behind them. The woman at the podium starts going through an agenda about the delivery of the mail yesterday, the day before, and up to the time you are there, in that 24-hour period.

Everyone is called to account. They are asked for any complaints, large or small. They go across the country geographically. What problems were there in British Columbia yesterday? What were the problems in Alberta? They talk. Someone will stand up and say, "There was a snow storm in this part and we did this," or "We had this problem with that," right down to a piece of mail.

I remember when I was there, Mr. Lander said to someone, "Were there any complaints about your department?" "Yes, we had a complaint from a customer about some very important business mail that was misdelivered." "What did you do about it?" "Well, we phoned them and told them we were sorry; that we had found it. We did find the mail, and that we would deliver it." They had put tracers on the lost mail overnight and, in that particular case, had found it. Mr. Lander then said, "So then what happened?" and the reply was, "Well, the customer said he was sorry because he realized he had misdirected the mail." They had traced it right

down to that one thing, out of all the complaints that had been filed in that day.

It is a very impressive sight to see. You are through in about an hour and a half. I do not care whether you are for or against the post office: I guarantee you that it will be a memorable experience, and you will not feel that you have wasted your time by going out and seeing how our Canadian post office conducts its business.

Canada Post enjoys a world-wide reputation, earned particularly in the last five or six years when it actually delivered a dividend to its shareholders, namely the Canadian public, the taxpayer and the government. It lost money last year, but made a handsome profit in prior years and expects to do so again this year.

It is against that background that I want to explain our opposition, on two grounds, to this bill concerning Canada Post. Our opposition is to the bill, and not to Canada Post's successes, which we commend.

I circle for attention the following two elements of the bill: The first element is the bill's employee share savings plan, and the second element is its potential effect on postal service, particularly to certain sectors of the post office's customers.

The proposed amendments, as Senator Meighen explained them to us, would enable employees of Canada Post to acquire 10 per cent of non-voting shares — and I underline nonvoting, issued as well as outstanding, in the Crown corporation. Participation in an employee share savings plan, or ESSP, would be voluntary, but a large number of employees would have an option to buy up to 10 per cent of shares held by the corporation.

One of the stated advantages of an ESSP is improved labour/management relations, also underlined by Senator Meighen. Supporters of the legislation sincerely believe that giving employees a direct financial incentive will increase productivity and efficiency. Government supporters, including Senator Meighen, have repeatedly denied that this bill is the first step towards privatization of Canada Post, although as Senator Meighen said on March 25 at page 2947 of *Hansard*:

• (1630)

This government has never hidden its intentions to privatize the corporation, and such is the case. When and if the decision is made that privatization is an appropriate course of action, the government would of course make no secret of such a decision. Legislation would have to be brought forward, because this bill before us specifically restricts the ownership of shares to the Crown and to employees of Canada Post. The merits of this plan, honourable senators, will determine its success with the employees of Canada Post.