

Supply

● (1250)

Members of the Government have said that they will close 1,700 rural post offices and amalgamate or privatize another 3,521. That is what the postal plan states. We expressed our opposition to that plan in committee. Knowing the chairman, I feel confident that the committee will make the proper decision. Knowing the members of the committee, I know that they will make the right decision. I firmly believe that after the committee reports, it will be up to the Prime Minister. I do not know what he will say. Will he stand in the House and say that what the committee has said does not make any sense? I think he will be in quite a spot, if I read the committee properly. Canada Post will have to go back over the postal plan and change a great deal of what it has already started to do in Canada. I firmly believe that that will be the result as it flows from the committee under the chairmanship of the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake (Mr. Holtmann). I am sure that I made the proper decision in nominating him for the position that he is presently in.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Are there questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm).

Mr. Domm: I have some short questions to ask the Hon. Member, Madam Speaker. I hope he will answer them as quickly as I ask them. Can the Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate (Mr. Baker) tell the House how many days were lost through labour disruptions in the five years prior to the incorporation of the Post Office? Can the Liberal Party tell us if it hired the president of the letter carriers as an adviser? We noticed that the Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate was sitting behind that gentleman and passing him notes during committee hearings. Can the Hon. Member tell us if the unions will accept new working conditions and reduced wage rates to allow the country to afford more door-to-door delivery? Can the Hon. Member tell us what the average wage rate is in his home town and how it compares to the \$14-an-hour rate that postal workers make? It is true that the union president at Canada Post Corporation has said: "Management pays us but we run the company". Does he agree with that statement?

Mr. Baker: Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member asks if I agree with the average rate of \$14 an hour. Of course I do. Some of these people deserve a lot more than \$14 an hour, since Mr. Lander, the President, is making close to \$200,000. He was appointed by the Tories and is looking for a wage increase.

Do I approve lower wages for postal workers? No, absolutely not. Does the Hon. Member mean to tell me that everyone will now have to take a wage-cut under the Conservative Government? It appears that way when one looks at a great many of the positions taken by Treasury Board in terms of employees of the federal Government.

The Hon. Member asks me if we have employed the head of the Letter Carriers' Union as an adviser. I love to have the advice of the Letter Carriers' Union since members of that union are the ones who should know what is going on in the field. They are the ones who should be asked where corners can be cut. I can get a great many more answers from the union than I can from the President of Canada Post. He is no relation to Ann Landers, I can assure Hon. Members of that. One can get no answers from him.

The Hon. Member asks how many days were lost through labour disruptions prior to incorporation. I do not have a clue how many days were lost. I can assure the Hon. Member that when Canada Post was incorporated everyone was happy. Do you remember that day in the House of Commons, Madam Speaker? You do not remember it. It was back in 1981, but it seems like it was years ago. Everyone from all political parties was happy. The unions were happy, everybody was happy. The Post Office would break even, but everyone realized about two years ago that that was a false expectation on the part of the Crown corporation. It could not do that because it had gone too far one way, that is, in terms of cutting service. It had gone much too far and it is going to have to back-track now to recover the loss in service it had incurred. As well, it lost a lot of business.

I would like to tell Hon. Members from western Canada about something that takes place at Bonavista Bay, which is in my riding. Every time someone from the eastern section of Calgary mails a letter to the western section of the city that letter ends up in Bonavista Bay in Newfoundland because the postal codes are similar. I checked with the postmasters and I discovered that there are several communities around the Newfoundland coast to which western Canadian mail is being directed because the postal codes are similar. That is what happens when we deal only with machines. That should be a lesson to anyone examining Canada Post. People are more important than machines.

Mr. McCrossan: Madam Speaker, my question is a fairly short one. In his speech the Hon. Member indicated that this was a major departure from past practices. He was referring to the curtailment of delivery. I wonder if the Hon. Member is aware that the Conservative Government in 1979 announced major expansions in delivery in metropolitan Toronto in terms of door-to-door delivery which the Government of the Hon. Member cancelled in 1980, the day it came to power. His Government left those houses without door-to-door delivery for the entire four years it was in power. Is the Hon. Member aware of that?

Mr. Baker: Madam Speaker, I will tell you what I am aware of in terms of door-to-door delivery. When it is said that door-to-door mail delivery will be reinstated it does not mean that everyone will receive door-to-door delivery.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!