

Supply

[English]

In 1981, the mandate given to Canada Post was threefold; it was first to improve labour-management relations, second, to increase productivity and better postal service and third, to reduce the deficit. Each of these priorities was to be given equal weight. Thanks to that clear mandate, we saw for a while some progress in improving labour-management relations in the post office and on the deficit-reduction side. However, in the Budget of February 1984, the Government, through the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), made it clear that the main priority of the post office was not to deliver the mail but to balance the books.

[Translation]

All that, Mr. Speaker, without any discussion here in this House, without any debate, without any regard for service improvement, without any regard for the improvement of management-employee relations. One thing only is all-important: to balance revenues and expenditures. We also want Canada Post to eliminate its deficit. But let us not forget the American experience. Their postal service needed 14 years to achieve that goal. It did not happen overnight.

[English]

By redirecting post office management to dwell almost exclusively on cost-cutting, the Government threw out the baby with the bath water. Services are being cut and Canadians are being short-changed. There has not been a postal strike since 1981. Now, because of the almost exclusive concentration of the Government on cost-cutting, labour-management relations have deteriorated to the point that there is talk of a strike. If there is a strike, the responsibility will rest clearly on this Government, because it has so reordered the priorities of the post office that management and labour are finding it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to work out their differences.

There are even some who hold the view that the Government wants a strike in order to make massive reductions in post office staff. Surely that would be too callous and too stupid even for this Government. However, we are putting the Government on notice today. It had better get its act together.

[Translation]

The Government should first reinstate the mandate given to the Canada Post Corporation in 1981 to improve labour-management relations, increase productivity and provide a better service, while reducing its deficit. Let us give management and workers the tools needed, and they will fulfil their mandate.

I am not blaming today the management of Canada Post Corporation, nor union leaders. Members of management are working within a framework. The Government directs them to make every effort to achieve savings. They try to comply with

instructions. Their actions only reflect the mandate given to them.

[English]

Prior to Canada Post becoming a Crown corporation, the Liberal Government of the day had an interim policy of providing community mailbox service to new communities awaiting door-to-door delivery. It was never intended, and I repeat, it was never intended, that this temporary service should become a permanent replacement for home delivery. However, in June 1985, in response to the Government's fiscal instructions, the Post Office made supermailboxes a permanent feature. From that point forward, no Canadian who moved into a new subdivision in any part of Canada would receive door-to-door delivery.

By the end of 1991 there will be close to one million supermailbox addresses. At an average of two people per address, that means that there will be about two million second-class Canadians. That is unfair, unjust and discriminatory. We believe that every Canadian deserves fair and equitable service, every Canadian deserves equal treatment from his Government, particularly in the postal service, and every Canadian pays the same 36 cents for a postal stamp and so deserves the same delivery and the same service.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): In addition to unfairness, my colleagues have reported to the House repeatedly that the boxes do not even work. Some have been broken. For some, one key opens every box in the neighbourhood. Some were frozen over. Some could not be opened. Snow made some boxes inaccessible in wintertime. Surely one is not constrained from asking, did no one in the Government recognize that we still have a rough Canadian winter?

• (1130)

Some time ago in this House I asked the Minister responsible to get rid of the supermailboxes. I asked him to restore door-to-door delivery. In response all we have had is a massive advertising campaign to convince Canadians that the supermailboxes are a great idea. They are not a great idea. They are not even a mediocre idea. They are a lousy idea and we ought to get rid of them.

How are the physically handicapped supposed to get to these boxes to pick up their mail? What about shut-ins? What about the elderly with low incomes who want to keep in touch with their families and who may not be able to use long distance? It is totally unacceptable that the Government is going to force an 80-year old widow to trudge through the snow in 40 degree weather to try and get her mail from a frozen supermailbox. That is assuming the mail is even there. Her pension cheque may not even have been delivered. She would then have to trudge back empty-handed after exposing herself to that kind of deprivation and sometimes risk. That is not the sort of thing