

Government Orders

How could you expect employees of the postal corporation to feel that they are part of an operation when the government is treating them this way? At the moment there are over 100,000 outstanding grievances at Canada Post. That is roughly two grievances per person.

That tells it all. The unions said they wanted to resolve this dispute, agreed to resolve the dispute, turned it over to an arbitrator and the legislation came through to require this. The postal corporation pulled all of its offers and today we have no collective agreement for the employees.

This is not the way to conduct an operation. My hon. friend from the Conservative Party who just spoke said that the government is committed to making Canada Post a profitable business. It has to be a profitable corporation. This is a government service that has to make money. It has to be profitable.

An hon. member: It is the measure of all things.

Mr. Riis: It is the measure of all things, as my colleague from Edmonton reminds me. That is the Tory measurement.

The government does not suggest that this is necessary for the RCMP. It does not have to be a profit-making corporation. The fire departments are not profitable. The ambulances do not make profits. The hospitals are not supposed to make profits. Universities are not supposed to make profits. The Canada Post Corporation, which services every person in this country on a regular basis, has to make money to be successful.

We say this is nonsense. NDP logic asks why should we choose one service to have to generate revenue from the people of Canada when already we own this? Quite frankly, we can say that in terms of cost recovery, we have always supported measures that would result in cost recovery, but to be convinced that this ought to be a profit-driven business is ludicrous.

We say that having these programs put into place in an effort to increase employee morale by using the silver star system is something you would find in a kindergarten class. A grade three class would probably be embarrassed by that approach.

We oppose this legislation, obviously. We oppose this legislation because we believe that this will do absolutely nothing to promote labour-management peace within the postal corporation. As a matter of fact, it is such an embarrassing piece of legislation, such a humiliating piece of legislation and such an aggravating piece of legislation that it is like walking up to every postal employee and poking them in the eye with a finger. That is what the minister is trying to do here. We think this is the wrong approach to labour-management relations.

We also oppose this legislation because unquestionably this is the first step toward the full privatization of Canada Post. I know the record is clear that the government's plan is to privatize every rural post office in Canada. That is the stated goal.

Already it has privatized significant numbers. One of the best examples of this totally silly decision was in my own constituency in a small community called Westwold, British Columbia, which has a few hundred citizens and services a rural farm area primarily.

It had a post office which was the centre for the entire community. It provided the nucleus for the community. People would come during the day, exchange views and see what was happening in the community as a result of notices, and they would conduct their postal business.

The postmaster had to vacate and so the postal corporation said this is the opportunity now to privatize the post office, to close it down. The question was where does it go? There are no businesses, no retail outlets in the community. It said: "Listen, we have a good idea. There is another community about 30 kilometres away. We can put it there and let everyone drive there every day to collect their mail and do their postal work. Or, there is a legion in the area that has a bar and we could have it as an adjunct to the bar". A lot of people said: "This seems to be kind of silly because a lot of times the children are picking up the mail or, quite frankly, I do not relish the idea of picking up my mail in a bar".

Mr. Rodriguez: What is wrong with that?