

Oral Questions

Will this government return our postal service to its original purpose, to deliver the mail quickly and fairly to all Canadians, and will the minister now roll back Mr. Lander's salary to at least a measly quarter of a million dollars a year and tell him that he is not going to get his Christmas bonus this year for being a good boy last year?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is saying we should go back to the past when taxpayers dipped into their pockets to subsidize the post office \$500 million to \$600 million. We are still paying interest on those subsidies we had to borrow the money for in the past. I certainly would not recommend we return to the bad old past in that context.

The international postal union says that Canada Post is the most efficient postal system in the world. Surveys by independent market survey companies of the changes the post office has implemented in terms of new outlets in corner grocery stores and so on show a 90 per cent approval rating.

No, we are not going to go back to the past. Come on, George, join the present and the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, the Tory government gave the president of Canada Post a salary increase of \$131,250. Meanwhile, Huguette Perrier, a 65 year old widow, who has delivered mail in Dalkeith, Ontario in my riding for nine years, was fired to save Canada Post \$1,500 a year. Is that justice?

[*English*]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of all sides of the House, in 1981 the member for Papineau introduced a bill creating a Crown corporation and we all agreed in this House that the corporation should run like a business and should operate at arm's length from the government. It was unanimously agreed. In terms of remuneration of senior officials in Crown corporations and agencies, we have an outside group that advises us on what is appropriate given the marketplace and the salary

levels. That group, as a matter of fact, was set up by the Liberal government.

Is the hon. member suggesting we go back to the bad old days where all of these decisions as to who is delivering mail here are done on a partisan basis and are done by the politicians, or should we accept the judgment of this House in 1981 to let the post office operate at arms length, and should we not be applauding the fact that it is now the most efficient post office in the world.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, if I were this government I would not talk about nominating people on a partisan basis.

This has to do with fairness again. How can a government give the head shogun of Canada post a \$131,250 salary increase and fire someone who delivers the mail in my riding, a widow, to save \$1,500? Is that not at least wrong in the eyes of the minister or is there no sense of fairness at all left with this government?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): As I tried to explain to the hon. member this government, in following the instructions of this House, does not get involved in the individual decisions of the post office as to how to deploy its staff, which businesses to open, and so on. That was the instruction from the House. We are following those instructions.

The hon. member is suggesting, presumably, that these decisions as to who is hired or fired are made by politicians. People would call that a patronage-based system. I do not think that is appropriate.

The question of the service to people and the management of the post office has been examined and assessed by independent pollsters. We have the track record. I think it is absurd for anybody to look at that record and suggest we go back to the bad old days when taxpayers had to dip into their jeans to subsidize an inefficient operation. We should be applauding—

Madam Deputy Speaker: We are getting into debate.

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YUGOSLAVIA

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Madam Speaker, yesterday the federal Yugoslav army continued to wantonly shell the Croatian city of Dubrovnik. In response to a question in this House, the Minister for International