

Supply

Mr. Boudria: The Minister says that I should read the plan. I have read whatever little of the plan the Government has allowed us mortals to see.

Mr. Côté (Langelier): They are the same boxes that you installed in 1983.

Mr. Boudria: It is quite evident that the boxes that are in the area that I represent are inaccessible to people in wheelchairs. It is also quite evident in that area, notwithstanding what the plan indicates may happen in the future, according to which part the Government decides to adopt, that people who purchased homes in an urban area in order to receive normal services for an urban area are not receiving those services. That is the point I am making.

I am asked why people should have that service. It strikes me as normal, elementary justice that if there are four streets in a row, and street number three and street number one have mail service, then street number two and street number four should have exactly the same service. I suggest that anything less is an injustice to the people whom I represent.

[*Translation*]

But the Post Canada plan has created a new problem, and I am referring to rural mail delivery. The Minister responsible for Canada Post and his assistant—incidentally, he has been observed recently hanging around post offices in my riding—should know that what Canada Post is doing at this very moment is totally unfair.

Here are some facts. First I should like to talk about the people who deliver mail in rural areas of this country, specifically about one individual. For openers, now we know that a person who delivers mail along rural routes will have to submit tenders to renew his or her own contract. Imagine, Madam Speaker, an individual has to make a bid to keep his or her job. Such is the new policy of the Government, the policy of Canada Post. I would draw the attention of Hon. Members to the case of one of my constituents from the Hawkesbury area, Mr. Ronald Laliberté. For 35 years now he has been delivering mail for Canada Post. He is 53 years old. That is about all he has done during his life, but now he has to submit a tender and he cannot be sure whether he will be able to hang on to the job he had had for 35 years. Where can he look for a job after working so many years for the same employer? We can only wonder what working conditions were like 35 years ago.

Madam Speaker, I know from a reliable source that 30 years ago he was badly injured while delivering mail. Delivering mail in rural areas is not exactly the cushiest job. Some years ago, the same people who delivered the mail in winter sometimes used skis, snowshoes or any other device they could get their hands on to do their work. And now the appreciation they are getting are this: "Mr. Smith or Mr. So-and-so, as of April 1st, if you want to keep your job you will now have to apply for it and bid lower than others". This is what they get in the way of appreciation after so many years of service.

That is unfair, Madam Speaker.

• (1710)

[*English*]

I would like to speak now about the rural post offices. The Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association, its President, Mr. Starkey, and others, met with members of the Liberal caucus this afternoon. They made us aware of the fact that, for instance, 72 per cent of parcel post business belonged to the Post Office in the past. A decade later Canada Post has only 12 per cent left of that business. That business is dwindling because Canada Post cannot provide adequate service. Therefore, that service will gradually be lost.

What about the issue of weekly newspapers? What is going to happen to that business as a result of this centralization of rural mail? Right now, if weekly newspapers in my riding and elsewhere are published on Tuesday, the owner of the newspaper, or one of its employees, will take it to every small post office in the area and the postmaster will hand it out to the local people on Wednesday. Do you think, Madam Speaker, that a larger post office will have that same day service for weekly newspapers? I say it will not. That will doom the weekly newspaper industry. No one wants to read a weekly newspaper if it is three, four or five days old. The whole business of providing a consolidation of rural routes is not going to work.

[*Translation*]

Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, in a rural area such as Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, what it means to tell people: "You will have to walk or drive 4 kilometers to get your mail, in rural areas?" I have in my constituency many senior citizens living in rural areas. Some do not even own a car. How are they going to get their mail?

The Government's suggestion concerning that rural consolidation is unreal, so much so that people living in the suburbs or the outskirts of villages—

The corporate plan of the Canada Post Corporation informs us that people in rural areas living less than two kilometers away from a post office will get the same service as those living within the limits of a village.

Do you know what that means, Madam Speaker? That means that if you live at a distance of two kilometers or less from a post office, from now on you will have to walk to fetch your mail. They no longer deliver the mail to the mailbox in front of your house. That is what it means for people living in rural areas in my riding. Do you think it is reasonable to require from a person who is 60, 70 or 80 years old to walk a distance of two kilometers in a snowstorm, on a day like today, to get his or her mail?

The Canada Post Corporation wants these superboxes in rural areas. First, we thought we were going to get them in urban areas. Now, they would like to give them to us in rural areas. Can you imagine such a superbox on the corner of the third concession, at a distance of four kilometers from nowhere? People will have to walk to get there, and what will