

Supply

What a change of policy from the Act which Parliament passed in 1981. At that time it was clearly stated that Canada Post will maintain an equity of service in given areas, that there will be a quality of service in similar circumstances. That is in the Act. But a postal plan was approved which omits that in its objectives. It takes that equity away. We are told, you can have door to door mail delivery here and superboxes—or super-blooper boxes—over here. A plan has been approved where all of our rural areas could be changed.

The Standing Committee met this morning at nine o'clock. The chairman stood in the House a few moments ago and was angry with the New Democratic Party. He was very vocal about what the New Democratic Party said. I must admit to the House now that I was the person who nominated the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake (Mr. Holtmann) as chairman of the Standing Committee.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: Government Members are applauding. Perhaps they would let me finish. He was not the choice of the Government. They are not applauding now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Malone: Now we are applauding.

Mr. Baker: If there is one thing the Hon. Member for Selkirk—Interlake must keep in mind, it is that he is the chairman of the committee and he should not become too angry with the New Democratic Party. I do not think he will get too angry with me if I repeat what he said a few moments ago. He said: it is just like the railways, and sometimes you have to close down the rail lines. I wonder if the chairman is giving us a message for the next meeting. He adjourned the meeting this morning at eleven o'clock and told all the members of the committee: "If you talk about what went on in the committee meeting this morning, I will hold you up for contempt in the House of Commons". That is exactly what he said. We were told: "You have to be quiet now. You are not allowed to talk about what went on at the meeting". But if I read him correctly, I would say the chairman is somewhat in favour of the closure of some post offices.

Our position as the Official Opposition is that it should be as it always was in rural Canada. If Canada Post wanted to close a post office in that community, it told the people it was going to close the post office and asked if there were any objections. If the majority of people thought the post office should be closed and an alternate service provided, so be it. That is the official position we take on rural postal delivery. The Conservative philosophy is, of course, yes, for privatization, hand it over to franchises, have the local businessman deliver the mail.

Mr. Malone: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baker: I hear in the distance a "hear, hear" from western Canada. That might be all right in some communities but it is not all right in all the communities. How would the

local businessman, for example, find the time to handle everything the local postmaster handles? Is it not a conflict of interest for small businessmen in small communities to deliver mail at the same time they deal with these people on a financial basis? Is it not an infringement of peoples privacy if their social security cheques, or unemployment insurance cheques or Canada pension disability cheques come in the mail and have to be delivered to them over the counter by the very businessman to whom they owe money? Is that not in a great many cases a great conflict of interest? All of those things must be thought out.

The bottom line is that under this postal plan, which was approved by Cabinet, there is to be a discontinuation of door-to-door mail delivery. That is the bottom line. The Conservative Government has approved a postal plan which will see no more door-to-door mail delivery in Canada, other than what we presently have. It has also said to rural Canada, we are going to close down your post offices. It has said they will still have postal services in most of those places but it will be a combination of franchising, local businessmen, and perhaps a mailbox outside, some sort of superbox or super-doooper box out in the backyard of the local businessman. That is not good enough.

That is why we support the motion put to this House today. We support it wholeheartedly. I notice the mover of the motion has said it is not a motion of confidence or non-confidence in the Government. I do not know how much that will count as far as the vote is concerned.

I want to make one final point to members of the Standing Committee and that is that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) stood in this House on Thursday and Friday and said: whatever the committee suggests to him and to the House of Commons, if it makes sense. Those were his exact words. I do not know if he is trying to tell us that everything the committee says does not necessarily make sense, or what he is trying to say, but I assume that when he said "if it makes sense", he has reason to believe that a great deal of what the committee says will make sense, and that will take precedence over the postal plan and the postal plan will be changed accordingly.

Mr. Lewis: That is democracy.

Mr. Baker: That is the bottom line. I can assure the House and the people of Canada that the position of the Official Opposition in this matter will be to reinstate door-to-door mail delivery as it was before the postal plan was approved. The postal plan is that there will be no more door-to-door delivery for all time. No Conservative can stand in this House and say there was no change with respect to the postal plan. If he does that then he cannot read. There is no more door-to-door mail delivery in Canada, no more extensions. In other words there is no more delivery to the end of the lane in the rural areas. Throw that out the window, say some Conservative Members.