

Oral Questions

deficit issue but the encouraging news is that it has given Canada a low risk rating which obviously I welcome.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Madam Speaker, as Mr. Francis has indicated, it gives Canada a low risk rating. What it suggests to him is that Moody's puts the debt burden in Canada at 50 per cent of GDP and the United States debt burden at 48 per cent of GDP. We recognize that the Clinton administration has taken a number of proactive steps to try to generate life back into their economy and this government is doing nothing.

The Minister of Finance is aware of the Auditor General's report that says that two of the major reasons we have a deficit crisis is because of the government's monetary policy of high interest rates and the myriad of tax loopholes that continue to exist in our tax system, including the family trust that was just recently introduced by this government once again.

If the Minister of Finance is serious about this debt issue, will he do the right and proper thing and start closing off in some serious way these massive tax loopholes that continue to exist, like the family trust.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member speaking on behalf of the New Democratic Party would like to see the capital gains exemption and exemptions to small business removed because they consider them to be tax loopholes.

The hon. members talks of Canada having excessively high interest rates. Let us look at the facts. He is criticizing Canada's monetary policy.

An hon. member: It spreads.

Mr. Mazankowski: It spreads. Let us deal with the prime interest rate. On May 25 Canada's prime rate was at 6 per cent, the United States prime rate 6 per cent, France's prime rate 8.8 per cent, Germany's prime rate is 10 per cent, the United Kingdom is 7 per cent and Italy is 12.25 per cent. I ask you, Madam Speaker, are Canada's interest rates high or low? They are the lowest in the pack.

CANADA POST

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Madam Speaker, all the members of Parliament recently received this very attractive Canada Post annual report. It has terms like "on code, track and trace, enhanced targetry" and so on.

My question is for the minister responsible for Canada Post. Why does the government not tell us in the report how many rural post offices were closed in 1992-93? In other words, at what price to rural Canada was this so-called successful year realized?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I certainly want to offer the hon. member a briefing on all those difficult technical terms so he will be able to understand the report.

The hon. member may also be interested, if he is fair-minded, in the number of new postal outlets opened in rural Canada. It has been a ratio of 2:1; two openings for one closing. In fact, the total number is increasing.

He will also be interested to know that in post change surveys of the customers affected, the approval rating has been over 80 per cent. Every time you get an 80 per cent approval rating you know you are doing the right thing.

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Madam Speaker, if the minister would come clean on this I would try and understand. If he would tell me how many rural post offices closed I will work real hard on understanding.

Perhaps the minister should start to appreciate that not all Canadians live in Calgary, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. I know some who live in Westport, Marlbank, Seeleys Bay, Spencerville and Lombardy.

Constituents write and tell me it takes a general delivery letter four days to go 32 miles and three days for a letter to go 13 miles.

• (1445)

On behalf of all the people who live in rural and small town Canada, I want to ask the minister this: When is Canada Post going to start delivering the mail again in rural Canada?