

Government Orders

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member had concluded his 10 minutes and there is no period of question or comment after that. I am sorry. The hon. member for Annapolis Valley—Hants has already spoken on the bill.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Madam Speaker, I am rising today to speak to the amendment to Bill C-73 of the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I cannot help but look at the intent of his amendment and realize that what he is trying to do here is to ensure that if Canada Post is privatized, and the employees are allowed to own shares, that they will have the ability to sit on that board of directors.

Canadians, particularly across rural Canada, have a lot of apprehension about the dictatorial policies being exercised by Canada Post and by the government itself on this issue.

We have seen post office after post office across this country closed down. In some cases there is a call for community consultation, but the consultations are meaningless. In fact, I only know of one place in my constituency where Canada Post Corporation had to back down. I am speaking here about the village of Newbury. It was only by the tenacity of the reeve, Diane Brewer, and her council that they were made to back down. Some of the information that Canada Post was giving out was not true. She was told that Canada Post would not allow a municipality to operate the post office, but today that is happening and they are operating it extremely well.

• (1540)

I have to give credit to Diane Brewer and the council of Newbury for having stuck to their guns in forcing Canada Post to back down. We have seen a whole host of closings since that.

I attended one of those meetings and I had other representatives attend other meetings. Canada Post is not there to negotiate with the people of the town. It is there to tell them what is going to happen whether they like it or not.

There is one particular case that I want to speak about. It is the case of the heavy-handed tactics of Canada Post and its insensitivity to history and to those who served their country in time of war. This concerns the village of Watford and the local cenotaph that was erected in the village by the Royal Canadian Legion. I am an honorary member of Branch 172 of the Legion. It maintained this site for 59 years. Then, when the post office was closed

down, Canada Post was going to tender the property for sale. Whether or not Canada Post intended the cenotaph to go with it, I cannot say at this point.

I want to just read into the record part of a letter from the Royal Canadian Legion to Mr. Craig of Canada Post Corporation. It quotes him as saying that Canada Post indicates that the property on which the cenotaph stands is maintained by Public Works Canada. The statement is absolutely incorrect. The letter goes on to say: "We, the Royal Canadian Legion, have maintained the property and the monument in every way since the erection of the monument in 1933". That was for 59 years, and yet Canada Post, that did not have the property in its name, claimed that it had maintained it and owned the property and the cenotaph.

I quote again from the letter: "We believe the cenotaph, as well as the fenced property on which it stands, is owned by the Watford branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. If you have documents to substantiate other ownership or maintenance, please send me a copy within 21 days or by March 28, 1991".

The village would like to buy the property and they still have not got it. The village would buy the property and the building and here we have Canada Post playing games with the monument that recognizes and honours those who fought and died for this nation in the two world wars and in Korea. It is playing games for what reason, I do not know, but it is a shame that this sort of thing is allowed to happen.

The village submitted a request to purchase the building and cenotaph, as I mentioned earlier, but then Canada Post responded that it would lease it to the town. It did not want to sell the building. What is it waiting for, a better offer or until the spirit is broken as we have seen in so many cases? The town then responded that it would agree and it would submit a request to lease with the option to purchase after so many years. That would be negotiated. Do you know that Canada Post has not responded as of this date to this submission or this request? This request was made last fall.

What kind of trust do we have in an operation like that? What kind of an example does this set for other parts of society to completely ignore a cenotaph in a village centre that has been maintained by the Watford branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 172, for 59 years? Surely there has to be some responsibility here to respond not only to the request of the Royal Canadian Legion but also to the town itself.