

Routine Proceedings

approval rating. If one goes there before the change, as in Dubuc, people say: "My God, they are going to take away our post office and soon we won't get any mail. Soon, we are going to have to drive to Saskatoon or Regina to pick up your mail and soon, soon, soon—". The bogeyman and the scare tactics are used and the people say: "Holy smokes, holy smokes." It is human nature to be afraid of change. People say: "I don't know about change. I am pretty comfortable right now and you talk about change. This is comfortable, so why change?"

It is easy for the demagogue to tell them to fight that change. Change? They do not know what is going to happen. If we start this change, every woman in the post office might be fired, according to the hon. member. We might have weeks of delay. We might have to travel hundreds of thousands of miles to pick up our letters. People say: "Don't change, don't change! Where do I sign? Give me this petition and I will sign right now." It is easy to raise false fears in people when one says that change is coming. But change is inevitable.

The dinosaurs in the New Democratic Party and, increasingly, in the Liberal Party are locked into some notion that change can be resisted by political will. Well, it cannot and it should not, because change is progress and we are for progress. The change must be managed to make sure people are not hurt. The change should be undertaken in such a way to result in improvements and that is what the post office has been doing. It is running a profit for the first time in 30 years. Its users all say that the service is better today. Where these changes have occurred in rural Canada, the people affected have said: "This is an improvement." Not in every case, but an overwhelming majority say that this is an improvement.

The rest of the world is trooping in to Canada Post headquarters in Ottawa to see what is happening and they are amazed at the performance. In an article which I wish I had brought with me—but have not because I did not know this debate was coming up—Major users and mail groups in the United States said, if only Don Lander, the President of Canada Post, would come and become the Postmaster General of the United States Postal Service.

We are leading the world because of one very little simple policy decision we took. That is that we are not going to allow political interference in the operation of

the post office. With that one little policy decision we said: "You manage and we will keep the dogs at bay." I have the scars to show that sometimes that is tough, but it is worth it. We have the performance to show for it. This committee has said: "Keep up the good work, and two or three years down the line, when this progress has reached another level, as any intelligent government should do, take a look at the prospects of perhaps some form of privatization. You may find that the benefits are significant enough to make it worth while."

• (1230)

I ask the Opposition, in vain I appreciate, but I ask it nonetheless, to keep an open mind. Change very often. Indeed, most of the time, it is beneficial if you think about it. If you get nervous when you think about change, perhaps you should be finding yourself a nice beach blanket for the beaches of Cuba, because that is the place where change is being resisted the most in this hemisphere, and if you are comfortable there, you are welcome to it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to apologize to the minister for my failure to use the right adverb, as he pointed out earlier. As I indicated to the minister, my English may not be the best but it is probably better than his own ability to speak the language of Molière.

I am sorry about my less than perfect ability to use the correct adverb in English. However, I am sure his Quebec colleagues will remind the minister that his French adverbs leave something to be desired as well.

In any case—

[*English*]

I am sure the minister's colleagues will want to ask him a question or two later. Perhaps I could ask the minister a few questions, if I can get his attention.

The minister said that he does not interfere with the operation of Canada Post. He says, and I paraphrase here, that for members to want postal policy that does not shut down rural post offices, that would be somehow interfering with the post office. Does the minister deny that it is his government which adopted the Canada Post corporate plan of November 1986 which called for the shutdown and/or privatization of all 5,221 rural post offices in Canada?