

Government Orders

You can write letters to the minister responsible for the postal corporation and you will get your official answer from his assistant and they will look into it. You may get a letter from someone in the postal corporation but onward the wheels turn and pretty soon the doors close and another post office is terminated. All the psychological negatives that have been mentioned here before about keeping a little presence of this country, let alone having a little purpose in being a member, have been eroded and that has been very unhealthy.

I cannot get on to all the things I would like to say, but I will have another chance after we get rid of this motion for second reading. I was here also when a fellow called Mr. Kiearns was the first Minister of Communications in 1966. He started a little policy of rationalization of existing post offices in the then postal department.

Why is the government in a lot of trouble today across the country? Some months ago I looked it up and Mr. Kiearns rationalized a total of 26 post offices in Canada from coast to coast. One was in my riding at the time. There was hue and cry from coast to coast about what he was doing to these social centres.

Now, as my friend from Yorkton—Melville says, and I think the figures are even more, we have already closed over 1,300 to 1,400 post offices. Is it any wonder that this government is in a rather poor state in the polls? Along with many other things, without repeating them all, I suggest that in terms of service to the constituents, this whole post office closure policy has been about equal to several other misguided policies of this government which justify the low state of the polls. Unless this somnolent caucus of the government wakes up and tries to make an input on post office closures there will not be any dramatic change in the polls, nor should there be.

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and to remind the House that what we are debating is not second reading of Bill C-73 but the amendment put forward by my colleague, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, that the further debate on this bill be considered six months

hence; in other words, that this bill be withdrawn by the government.

There is a very good reason for putting forward that amendment. At this point in its mandate, a six month hoist, as this motion is often called, perhaps if this government had the good sense to call an election there would be a Liberal government in place to put forward legislation to amend the Canada Post Corporation which would make more sense and would be more contemporary than this little bill which the government put forward on April 30 for our consideration.

When all of the problems and all of the concerns are considered that Canadians across this country have expressed to members in this House about the bad service, the bad employee relations, the closure of rural post offices and the litany of complaints which we have heard over the last seven or eight years concerning Canada Post, the government seems to be on some other planet when it puts forward this legislation which it purports will resolve all those ills.

The minister in charge of Canada Post on May 14, when he spoke at second reading of this bill, argued that the legislation would allow the Crown corporation to do several things. Let me cite from his speech.

One, it will build a stronger partnership between management and employees, thereby resulting in more harmonious labour relations in Canada's postal system.

Two, more harmonious labour relations will better position the corporation as it invests in new technologies and expertise it needs to expand in new areas of business activity at home and abroad.

Three, it will put its present and future employees on an even footing with the employees of other enterprises in the communications and distribution industry—

Four, it will continue to improve its service to the people of Canada and will do so with reasonable competitive rates.

Everybody knows about the desperate state of employee-management relations at Canada Post. I wonder about the paradox of having introduced this legislation, which is strongly opposed by the two major unions that deal with Canada Post; the Union of Postal Employees, which is opposed to this legislation—and some of its representatives have even spoken to me about it in my constituency—and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.