

*Government Orders*

are concerned. It will do absolutely no good in terms of Canada Post. It is a complete waste of time, effort, energy and money. This is probably a good reason that this place should shut down.

That is not our case to make as members of the opposition. For the government to suggest that Bill C-73 will do any good whatsoever shows the government is dreaming in Technicolor.

The purpose of this bill is to make 10 per cent of Canada Post's non-voting shares available for purchase by Canada Post employees on a voluntary basis. The minister responsible claims this initiative will help to eliminate the labour-management tension currently existing at Canada Post.

I wonder if the minister has spoken with anyone who works for Canada Post. If he had, he would know that this is not true at all. I have not encountered anyone who would even indicate there is one slight iota of hope that this is going to improve the working conditions and environment at Canada Post.

I met with some Canada Post employees. As a matter of fact I have had discussions with Canada Post employees and management across the country. Of course off the record, even they agree that this is a complete waste of time. It is an embarrassment because here we are offering the employees an opportunity to buy into the ownership of Canada Post and they tell me that they already own it. Canada Post is already owned by the people of Canada and they are people of Canada. Therefore they are already members and owners of this particular corporation.

• (1100)

They wonder if this is not some kind of a scam the government is trying to pull on employees by suggesting that somebody else owns this corporation. It is a Crown corporation. The people of Canada own that and the postal employees are already owners in a sense.

To suggest employees will now be permitted to buy into Canada Post is laughable. However, we have seen this story before. It ought not to be news to Canadians that the government is trying to give the impression of taking action particularly when it says it is going to

eliminate labour-management tension because of this. Nothing could be further from the truth.

One thing we have seen from the government is the dismantling of post offices across Canada over the last number of years. As a matter of fact the evidence shows that over 1,200 post offices across Canada have been closed by this government. It says this is all part of a money saving initiative.

It is something more than that. It is the removal of what has become a symbol throughout much of Canada, particularly in the small communities and rural areas. The one symbol of Canada always seen is the flag flying over the post office. It is much more than simply a government office. It is often the virtual centre of the community, the focus of community activity.

Some of the small rural post offices in my constituency act as a security check for individuals, particularly for senior citizens. In a small community just outside Kamloops last winter the postmaster noticed that a certain individual, an elderly gentleman, had not been in to pick up his mail for a number of days. He would come in regularly at 10 o'clock every morning to pick up his mail. It was part of his regular lifestyle. He had not been in for a few days so the postmaster telephoned the local detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and made this observation and it went out to check. Sure enough, the elderly gentleman was extremely ill as a result of a bad fall. Had he been left for perhaps even another few hours, certainly a few days, he would have died. However, they were able to rescue him as a result of the thoughtful initiative taken by the postmaster of this small post office.

That is one of many examples I am familiar with. I suspect I am familiar only with a handful of situations in my own constituency where the post office has played a valuable security role for individuals in the small community or rural area surrounding it.

This is part of the systematic dismantling of Canadian institutions that this government has launched into for over eight and a half years. The post office glue which holds this country together and reminds people daily of the unifying efforts of the Canadian government and how this institution has played such a critical role far beyond simply providing postal services is being dis-