

Oral Questions

Member's question has caused me to do something I have not done in this House in my 37 years here, and that is to blush with modesty. I thank him very much for this very constructive question.

The Hon. Member has always shown a great interest in seniors. Year by year, naturally people like me are more and more pleased to hear of that kind of interest.

I can assure him and all Hon. Members that I will be doing everything possible to encourage seniors and seniors' organizations, including the National Advisory Council on Aging, to let me know what thoughts, suggestions, and ideas they have for improvements in life for seniors, so that these can be given very serious consideration by the Government with a view to bringing in measures of this kind as soon as they can be afforded and are practical.

Our seniors have made this country what it is today, and are continuing to make a very important contribution to our country day by day. That is why they fully deserve our very best efforts on their behalf, and I can assure you that they are damned well going to get them!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: I want to assure all Hon. Members on the opposition side that I will arrange to give them equal time.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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CANADA POST CORPORATION**PAYMENT OF TRAINEE STRIKE-BREAKERS**

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Post Office. He will be aware that an arbitrator has indicated to Canada Post that it has to pay the people it has been training as strike-breakers union rates rather than the minimum wage. I wonder if the Minister has considered asking the Post Office not only to abandon its policy of using strike-breakers but also to abandon its policy of poverty-level wages? Does he not recognize that a person who works for a public service in Canada has a reasonable expectation of receiving a livable wage?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, that is the first time I have ever heard it suggested that post office employees were underpaid. This is amazing. I believe the Marchment committee identified post office wages as being 14 to 22 per cent above national industrial averages.

Regarding the specific question about the ruling of the arbitrator, I am informed by the Post Office that it is looking into the decision to see in fact what it means. It is still not

clear on what it means and is considering things like whether or not to appeal.

As to the Hon. Member's suggestion that I intervene in the management of the Post Office, I would be in contempt of Parliament if I did that because in 1981, his Party, the Liberal Party, and this Party all agreed that Canada Post should become a Crown corporation and that we should try to avoid political interference of the kind he is now suggesting I engage in.

FRANCHISE POLICY—REQUEST FOR RE-EXAMINATION

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Minister is aware that his own plan calls for franchising which implies the use of people paid a minimum wage. Will he not then recognize that it is his own policy that is driving Canada Post to a poverty-level wage strategy? Will he take the opportunity to re-examine his policy in light of the ruling of the arbitrator and the ruling made by the Canadian Labour Relations Board last week?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the corporate plan which was approved by the Government does indeed call for the opening of 6,000 new postal outlets over the next 10 years in order to give customers better service. These outlets will be in shopping centres where people go for their normal commercial activities. There will be parking and they will be open from ten o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night. It will be more convenient for the public. Is it the position of the NDP that the public be damned, what we must look after is J. C. Parrot?

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CHILDREN**TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY ON RUNAWAYS**

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Last night thousands of Canadians watched an extremely disturbing television documentary production entitled *Runaways* which told the story of teenagers who run away from home and live on the streets in cities right across Canada. The social problems that were portrayed in that documentary are obviously national in scope and demand immediate and urgent attention. What will the Minister do about it?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I saw part of that program yesterday. I believe it was a two-hour program and I saw approximately half of it. This is not done very often, but I think we should commend the people who produced that program.

What many of us recognize is that this is a multidisciplinary problem. I am not trying in any way to minimize the difficulties related to missing children. As a Government, we have tried to address some components of the issue. For example,