

Government Orders

A lot needs to be done with the Canada Post Corporation. How the government thinks it can get away with closing down our rural Canada outlets, wiping out rural post office box delivery and replacing it with group boxes and the whole host of measures that it has taken to alienate the Canadian people, the consumers, from the one corporation they ought to be able to count on to deliver a decent service is beyond me and I think beyond any rational Canadian. It is a cosmetic performance.

I support the motion for the hoist. This is bad law. It will accomplish nothing. It will accomplish less than nothing. It will move us even further backwards than we are today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-73, which is so important because it concerns the privatization of a Crown corporation that provides a vital service to Canadians: our postal service.

The government claims this bill would enable employees to acquire 10 per cent—one wonders 10 per cent of what—of Canada Post's net assets. How would this be done? What are the details? That information is not available, and that is why I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who moved for a six months' hoist to give the government and the minister responsible for Canada Post a chance to do their homework and come back with a detailed piece of legislation and a business plan. When a company decides to go to the public, to go to the stock market to sell shares, it goes with a business plan and written instructions indicating which shares will be voting, which non-voting, and so forth. There is nothing in this bill, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder, considering the opinion Canadians have of Canada Post and the misadventures that have befallen our postal services over the years, who would be prepared to invest in this kind of business, even as an employee of Canada Post. I think we should be realistic. We are a little—I don't want to use the words, but suspicious says it more or less. Why is the government taking this approach? We are told it wants to give employees a chance to participate in the corporation, but there are no details.

The government claims that when employees realize they can have a 10 per cent interest in the corporation, they will become more responsible and that this will make for peaceful labour-management relations within the corporation. As you know, Canada Post did have a quiet time for several years after it was incorporated, because it had been given a clear and specific mandate, consisting of three components.

The three components included providing a better service for Canadians as the first objective; second, better labour management relations; and third, they had to stop asking the government for money because the government was too busy dealing with the deficit. During the first few years, until 1984-85, objectives were met satisfactorily. In fact, from the time the corporation was created and up to 1986, if I am not mistaken, there were no strikes.

However, the strikes started again as soon as the Conservative government tabled its management plan, which included setting up supermailboxes in urban areas. Gradually, home delivery, something most Canadians were used to, was phased out. New homes would not have home delivery.

That is what happened, and I remember, because I was the critic at the time. I went across the country. I went to British Columbia and to the east, and some untenable situations had been created. On the same street, some residents were getting home delivery, while across the street, they had to get their mail from the green boxes, later called superboxes which, despite the name, were hard to open because keys tended to rust and the boxes froze, and so forth.

The other part of this plan, in 1986, was to privatize rural post offices or close them down altogether. Previous critics as well as the present critic for Canada Post, are still very much aware of this problem throughout Canada.

There was a board of directors on which the employer was represented, the union and consumers. All the ingredients for maintaining harmony were right there in the the Crown corporation's board of directors, which represented a good cross-section of our society. The potential was there to have good labour-management relations and to meet the all-important objective: to serve Canadians and have the best postal service in the world.