

*Routine Proceedings*

shopping centre or a store that is open in the evening when they have access when they are off work.

The New Democratic Party says that, in terms of equal work opportunity, it believes that the traditional family where the woman must stay in the house is no longer appropriate. We agree absolutely with it. Statistics reflect that families today are totally different in terms of how they function compared to the families of the 1940s and 1950s. We have participation rates in my city of more than 75 per cent. That is 75 per cent of the work age population, men and women, actually work. People, such as the housewife, are not at home to do the household mailings from nine to four, the time traditional post offices are open.

**Mr. Boudria:** Nine to four? Name one that is open from nine to four. Name one!

**Mr. Andre:** As I said, they get into the station-wagon after coming home from work, go to the dry-cleaners, and stop at the grocery store to get the milk and bread and to do their shopping. It is convenient for them if they can also do the household business and mail the cheques to MasterCard, Visa, or whatever. They do not use the mail today as they did 30, 40, or 50 years ago to keep in touch with Aunt Nellie. They do that by phone.

The post office serves a different function today and, in recognition of that different function and of how our society has changed, the post office is changing the way in which it operates. There is a lot more competition. Today, 58 per cent of the post office business is fully competitive. That seems to have escaped the notice of some members. They still think of the post office in terms of delivering the standard letter. No, that is nonsense. There is a whole range of products, parcels, special delivery, and courier-type services. There is a whole variety of competitive business at which the post office is doing very well.

By what rationale, other than some philosophy that you are so stuck in you cannot change, does one say: "Well, that may be true or not, but if, in fact, state ownership was the way we operated 40 or 50 years ago, that is the way we have to operate today"? Why? Why would members of Parliament be so closed-minded as to say we cannot consider an alternative?

Two or three years down the road, when the post office will be fully self-sufficient in the real sense of the word,

including cost of capital, I will concede that someone may then say: "Well, here are the arguments for privatization of some sort; here are the arguments against. In our view, the arguments for are not sufficiently strong to overvalue the arguments against. Therefore, we do not think it is appropriate to go ahead with the privatization at this point in time." I will concede that possibility. But, why will members opposite not concede the contrary? Perhaps, two or three years down the road, it will be looked at by someone who is rational and not locked into philosophical positions more to do with 19th century socialist philosophy than with 20th century reality, or even 21st century reality.

I do not understand the mentality that says state ownership is a must. I understand the New Democratic Party to a degree. It gets funded by the unions and I understand why Jean-Claude Parrot would prefer government ownership to private ownership. It is far easier for him to try to achieve what he wants to achieve through the exercise of political influence than through the normal collective bargaining of the private sector. I understand that and I understand why the New Democratic Party has to do that.

I do not understand where the Liberals are coming from. I do not understand that whatsoever, unless, perhaps, they are getting some money as well. Philosophically, what has been proposed in this report is something the member for Papineau, the former Postmaster General of a Liberal government, has in essence said should occur.

**Mr. Boudria:** When did he say you should shut down rural Canada?

**Mr. Andre:** I am glad he raised this rural Canada thing because I have got to deal with this nonsense about shutting down rural Canada. Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of places, a few hundred places, where the traditional post office has closed and been replaced by a retail postal outlet, in a general store, for example. They try to go into a business with which people in that area would normally interact and, therefore, make it convenient for them.

Where that has happened, we have gone back with post-change public opinion polling and the approval rating is over 90 per cent. That is an over 90 per cent