

*Government Orders*

The answer of the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville to that question illustrates in graphic degree the dichotomy that you have in a bill dealing with postal services between the rural and the urban member. Quite frankly, the postal corporation and the whole background of the postal corporation and its service or problems of service to the Canadian people really illustrate the differences between a bureaucratic approach to service and a departmental approach through which you can help service the people you are supposed to represent.

Ten minutes go very quickly and I want to get into basically this whole business of post office closures. There are perhaps more points covered. In a lot of the new areas of the country, with suburbia, I do believe with all the concern that we have with closure of post offices that some of the retail outlets, because of the difference in hours some cases, even in my own riding, are providing a better service than was provided when the post office was closed.

The real problem in this whole issue is it is one thing to put a retail outlet into a growing area of Canada and a new area of Canada and a suburban area of Canada where there are lots of people and the retail outlet can be put in a shopping centre in which there is no history of a previous post office. This is the total difference between retail outlets, which in many cases provide a very good service to the people they are supposed to serve. That is totally different than the present postal corporation policy of post office closures.

It has a policy that when a postmaster or postmistress retires or there is a vacancy because of death or sickness, the operation of that individual post office is reviewed. What has happened is that the so-called review of the post office really becomes the beginning of a closure of that post office in established areas, towns, villages, in which they have had post offices for years and eons.

I agree completely with other members who have spoken here today, especially with the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville who spoke in very glowing terms about the very real psychological function, let alone the service function.

My hon. friend from Macleod is a very fine member from a rural area. I have been in Macleod. His speech was written by the postal corporation. It was perhaps an interesting contribution to debate. In his heart of hearts I

would be very surprised if he has not run into the same problems that I have run into, that the hon. member from Peterborough has run into, in trying to intercede with the postal corporation about the closure of a local post office that has had a history in a community and is the only federal presence in that community.

It is a staged procedure by these PR people who go out doing their job. Admittedly they are doing their job. They have their instructions to have local hearings, talk to the people. Mabou, which is in the riding of the hon. member for Cape Breton Highlands—Canso, is one of the only post offices that I have heard about in all the closures in Canada which in effect the people have on their own initiative taken over from the postal people, as I understand it, and are going to run a post office that was set for closure.

That is the situation of having the rhetoric that we have an input into post office closures as members of Parliament. The reality unfortunately reminds us of Mr. Trudeau's admonition about members being nobodies. You can argue whether he meant in the House or 50 yards from the House. That is an interesting debate. In terms of post office closures, as far as I know from my experience and the experience of most other members here, once a post office is set for closure, even if it has been providing service for years, that post office has been closed and members do not have an input.

The point is that there has to be a balance. I am not hidebound to the realities of growing areas and retail outlets. As I said earlier, some of that has provided a very necessary service. I have no hesitation in voting for the amendment to put this bill off to another day or voting against the bill which talks about corporate shares and dividends and is more worried about the corporate world than about the people world.

• (1300)

I sat in this House during the debate on the postal corporation bill. The public has great reservations about what the devil members do and how well we do it, how poorly we do it or how we do ourselves good and bad. The horrible thing is, and there is not a member who can deny this, in terms of one of the basic services a government is supposed to give to its people, a postal service, members are basically nobodies because we created this postal corporation and set it up on a pedestal.