

*Government Orders*

listen. They might understand a little of what has been going on in an area I happen to know very well.

So what did happen in 1985? First of all, in 1982 the Department of Finance had set a timeframe for balancing the books which would extend over a number of years. As I said before, the corporation was well on its way to reaching that objective. However, when the Minister of Finance brought down his budget in February 1985, he decided that appropriations would be cut and they would have to balance the books starting that year. A few months later, the government introduced Canada Post's corporate plan, which, as you know, caused a regular revolt across the country, with the so-called supermailboxes people could not open because they were frozen shut, and they are still a big problem today. We remember the indignation of rural Canada, still very much alive today, because the government decided to close thousands of post offices in small towns and villages. These offices were the only federal presence, the only place one could see the Canadian flag.

• (1235)

I will not go into all the details because it would take hours, but as far as this bill is concerned—and that is why I have trouble supporting the bill and in fact, I am against it—what is the government doing about the situation? It is doing a little PR. The corporate plan was imposed by the government on Canada Post, and members of the board of directors who did not agree were obliged to resign.

We know what happened. We had two strikes during the last two terms of this government. Every time contracts had to be renegotiated, there was a strike that cost the country millions of dollars, with violence and the rest. Then in 1992 the minister responsible for Canada Post introduced a bill to say it would try and do some PR. Canada Post would offer 10 per cent of its shares to its employees. The catch is, they would buy those 10 per cent, but nobody knows how much it would cost or what they were worth.

The funny thing is, this government claims it is going to run the show and know how to run a business. As I see it, when you are in business and you decide to sell shares and put them on the market, you need a plan, and you have to know how much it costs. In this case, we have nothing. But the worst thing is that they are practically

insulting employees by saying: "You can buy 10 per cent, but you will not have a say in how things are done. You will not have any voting rights".

A shareholder buys shares in a company, whether or not it is a Crown corporation, and has no say in how the company is run. I do not think we can tolerate that today, in 1993. Whenever we ask the government about this, it keeps saying there is a corporation and we should let the corporation decide how Canada Post should be run.

However, in 1985 the government imposed a corporate plan. And all the problems we have seen since then were caused by this plan, which changed the original mandate given by the legislator, by this House, in 1982 when Canada Post Corporation was created. As I said before, at the time this was done to improve services and labour relations and to balance the books. But in 1985, it said: "Forget labour relations, forget services to the consumer and balance your books starting now, because we are not going to give you one more cent". In the process it destroyed something that represented and united us across this country.

Sure, according to the hon. member from Mississauga, the real reason is that it wants to privatize. Sure, sure, but listen. Are we going to privatize the House of Commons? There are some things that cannot be privatized. And our postal service is one of those things, especially in a country like Canada.

[*English*]

I am not joking. Imagine if we privatized Canada Post. In Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver a private enterprise can run the post office and make a profit. But what happens in the small towns and what happens in the north? It is the philosophy of this government that the country is just Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, and these days even Montreal is being shut out.

We have to stop this mentality and put people first, put service first. That is what we are here for. We have to provide the service and make sure that we can afford it. However we cannot just say that is the priority, because that is what this government did in 1985. The Minister of Finance presented the budget and said from now on, with the next fiscal year starting April 1, the government would not continue with a deficit and the books would be balanced.