

Government Orders

An hon. member: Waiting for the emergency debate.

Mr. Mifflin: —waiting for the emergency debate to take place.

An hon. member: Fifty members have asked for it.

Mr. Mifflin: There have been 50 members today who have asked for this. In my case, since February 21, some people have not had any compensation because they were not qualified in time when the plant in Port Union closed down. That plant holds 1,200 workers. There are 500 workers in the town of Charleston, which is a small town not far from my home town. They were told that their plant will not open and as of May they have no money or compensation and no hope of getting any.

Is it any wonder that the people are marching off to protest? Is it any wonder that they have no faith in the government? Is it any wonder that they want me to get up and talk about post offices and all the other actions that have been taken by this government that shut down Atlantic Canada, and Newfoundland and Labrador in particular.

I am fed up to the teeth with this and I hope the government takes some notice of the speeches that it is going to hear in this House on this despicable bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charles A. Langlois (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to members opposite make their contribution to the debate on the bill before the House today which provides for the sale of part of the shares of the Canada Post Corporation to its own employees. I must say I am very surprised that opposition members decided to criticize this legislation on every possible ground but failed to focus on the purpose of the bill.

I heard some extremely critical remarks about Canada Post earlier today, but perhaps we should go back a few years to the time when members opposite formed the government and Canada Post was a government agency. For many years, political interference by the party in power in Canada Post was so strong that the agency was

unable to run its operations effectively. It was a hot bed of Liberal patronage and politicians regularly interfered with this government agency at the time. We saw the results. Costs went up year after year, and when we came to power in 1984, the Canadian postal service was one of the most costly and least efficient in the world.

• (1620)

Canadians across this country complained about postal services, because the post office was managed from this House, from the government benches at the time. Our government did some housecleaning by making the agency a Crown corporation, operated at arm's length and administered by a group of competent managers with a specific mandate.

Our government gave Canada Post a specific mandate: to provide Canadians with adequate postal services at reasonable cost, and to implement a cost recovery plan. The result was two consecutive years of profits for Canada Post. This had been unheard of before, simply because politicians on this side of the House—our government—decided not to interfere with the managing of Canada Post. That is a well-known fact. That is why Canada Post booked the results we see today.

The hon. member for Miramichi spoke earlier of a deficit this year for Canada Post, which should come as no surprise. The corporation experienced some very serious labour relations problems which led to a strike, and any company that experiences a strike inevitably suffers a loss of income that will turn up as a loss on its books. This is only temporary, and I am convinced that current management at the corporation will put Canada Post back into the black in a matter of months.

I heard opposition members question the government's motives for allowing Canada Post to sell 10 per cent of its shares to its employees. What's wrong with that? I ask members opposite: What's wrong with that?

[*English*]

What is wrong with allowing the corporation to sell 10 per cent of its stock to the employees? There is nothing wrong with that.