

Oral Questions

I wish to ask the Minister if he is now prepared to stop treating Canada Post in this type of fashion where it has to cut back service to Canadians? Is he now prepared to withdraw those supermailboxes and reintroduce the high level of door-to-door service in urban centres across the country?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, let me deal with some of the inaccuracies. First, on what happened on the weekend, as I understand it the Letter Carriers' Union flew in a lot of people from around the country to hold a press event, which they did quite successfully. I compliment them on their ability to control the CBC.

But the fact of the matter is that nobody who receives group mailbox service had door-to-door delivery taken away from them. In 1974 or 1976, because then it was a Department of government, the Government decided that door-to-door delivery would not be extended into new areas, new subdivisions, and so on, and the Post Office as a Crown corporation, with the unanimous consent of every Party in the House, is operating in a fiscally responsible way.

If it is the desire of the New Democratic Party that door-to-door delivery be given to everybody who now receives mail in group mailboxes, general delivery, and so on, is the New Democratic Party also prepared to be honest enough to admit that it is willing to see a 60-cent stamp, because that is what it would cost?

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is the following. In light of the fact that yes, while everyone in this House, this Party included, wanted the Post Office Department to be turned into a Crown corporation, Canada Post, the fact remains that the Government handed to Canada Post a business plan which forced Canada Post to cut back services to millions of Canadians across the country, rural Canadians and urban Canadians.

Does the Minister think it is fair and just that, in an urban community, on one side of the street Canadians receive door-to-door delivery, and pay the same taxes as those who live across the street, and those who live across the street have to walk down to a supermailbox, and have the values of their properties reduced by having these monstrosities parked on their lawns? Does the Minister think that that is fair?

Mr. McDermid: It has always been that way, John. Where have you been?

Mr. Rodriguez: In no city has it been that way.

Mr. McDermid: Always in my city.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Minister has the floor.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, nobody has had door-to-door delivery

taken away from them, so the Hon. Member is simply making a false assertion.

Mr. Rodriguez: You have set up a two-class system.

Mr. Andre: The Hon. Member talks about two classes of citizens. Ever since Canada Post was formed there have been four or five ways for the mail to be delivered, door to door, group mailboxes, general delivery, or rural route. So, to use the NDP's definition, there must be four classes. That has been in existence for over 100 years. There has always been that distinction. No one has had a service taken away from them. Services have been improved. To do what the Hon. Member suggests is possible; it would only require an additional \$1.3 billion. If the Hon. Member wants that money to be borrowed so that future generations pay for the cost of delivering a letter today, let him have the integrity to say so openly.

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● (1450)

TRADE

CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT—REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT COMPENSATE GRAPE GROWERS

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. Last week we learned of the first victim of the free trade deal, an Okanagan grape grower. Today we learn that some 15 of the grape producers in Ontario have had to walk off their farms because of the free trade deal.

Will the Government make a commitment right now that there will be direct emergency compensation provided to the grape growers who are being devastated by this free trade deal?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit concerned. I question the accuracy of the Hon. Member's observation. I indicated in response to a question last Thursday or Friday that we have had problems in the grape industry, particularly in Ontario, for a good number of years. The Hon. Member should realize that we have purchased surplus grapes eight years out of ten. He must also realize that the most devastating effect on the industry is, of course, the GATT ruling.

We recognize that there is going to be some pressure on that industry. That is why we moved as quickly as December 4 last year to establish a federal-provincial and industry task force. That group has worked diligently since that time. I indicated on Thursday that it provided me with its report about 10 days or two weeks ago. Along with the provinces we are assessing it. As I said on Thursday, we will be making certain recommendations to Cabinet in the very near future.