

Government Orders

cable television operators and several others. But no, Canada Post wants to have its cake and eat it too and the minister says that is fine.

The minister's solution to making Canada Post more popular is to sell 10 per cent of the shares to the employees. Here is how this is going to work.

First, it is my belief this is the thin edge of the wedge in privatization. Remember when the government originally started to sell shares of Air Canada? It was only going to sell a certain percentage, and then a greater percentage and so on. For those who say this is not the thin edge of the wedge, nonsense, it is.

Second, the way Canada Post is going about this leaves something to be desired, even if one was in favour of the selling of the shares. I indicated a while ago that Canada Post is not a company like others in the sense that the books are not visible, at least not in the way they should be to most of us. We cannot find out much about how Canada Post operates save and except the very general information given in the annual report. My colleague from Carleton—Gloucester says it lacks transparency. Very well put and I congratulate him for that.

Either Canada Post or the minister wants to have these non-voting shares that can only be sold to employees. They are automatically redeemed when an employee leaves the corporation, they cannot be sold to anyone else and because Canada Post does not pay income tax presumably the dividend tax credit will not apply. It will not pay dividends, it will pay a fixed rate of interest.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you have guessed that already. The only thing the minister wants to do is find a way to get the employees to lend money to Canada Post.

The government provided Canada Post with a line of credit some years ago which appears in the government's estimates. Canada Post has only used a small portion of that line of credit and it is still there so it can borrow if it has a shortage of funds. It can also borrow elsewhere if that is the difficulty. If Canada Post has further difficulty you wonder why it is building a new Taj Mahal in Ottawa for its headquarters. Its present headquarters seems fancy enough as far as I am concerned.

• (1135)

Anyway, I guess it needs that money, or it says it needs that money, and it wants the employees to participate in the share offering.

The other problem is that the bill is wrong in that it does not provide any specifics on the nature of the share offering. There is no value for Canada Post Corporation at the present time. There is no value for the shares. No number of shares or anything like that is indicated in the bill. These things are left to the minister to designate by regulation some time later.

Show me, I am from Glengarry. I want to know. I want to know what the government is up to. Why can the government not tell us now what it intends to offer? If it has not made up its mind, then what is the rush for the bill? I have difficulty understanding that.

Apparently the Minister of Finance, the minister responsible for Canada Post and the Treasury Board have to get together to iron out these things. If they have not ironed them out, why are we doing this now?

The minister says that this proposal will assist in employer-employee relations. The union does not want it. How is it going to assist in relations with the union if the union does not want it? Canada Post is doing it anyway, and the stated purpose is to assist in those relations.

The minister says that this is not privatization. If the government is selling the shares to a private individual then it has by definition privatized at least those shares that it has just sold. Otherwise, it would not be selling them, would it?

I also have a little problem with management giveaways. Canada Post offers huge bonuses to some of its people in the upper echelon. In some cases, \$50,000 or \$75,000 a year is given in bonuses on top of the salaries that some of these people get. There is nothing in the bill that prevents the minister from issuing some of those shares as rewards to the upper management of Canada Post.

In other words, they can be disguised bonuses for the people at the top of Canada Post. There is nothing that precludes that. I asked that question of the minister at a briefing session that I had in his own office. He had a