

Government Orders

serious legislative proposal. I suggest it is not worthy of serious consideration and ought to be rejected.

I see my time has expired, Madam Speaker. I will save my further remarks until later on.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Madam Speaker, I want to enter this debate for historical reasons which I will explain, but first I want to meet the challenge of the member who just spoke and answer the question: "Is this bill in the best interests of Canada?" As I will explain, the bill is suited to the ongoing benefits of Canada Post, the workers of Canada Post and the citizens of Canada.

Let me go back in time to 1980 when the Canada Post Corporation Act was dealt with in the Parliament of Canada. It was of great concern to me at the time. The postal service was in turmoil, deficits had mounted to \$600 million a year, people were complaining across the country about the level of postal service and Parliament was asked to act. The Liberal government of the day brought in a bill to make Canada Post a separate Crown corporation.

I had for many years served as a legal officer in the province of Nova Scotia. I was well aware of the distinction between various emanations of government called Crown corporations, commissions and departments. I knew that basically there was no real difference. The differences were cosmetic in many cases. Those kinds of differentiations did allow for different perspectives and allowed for change and reform. That is what I thought was involved in the bill that was brought forward to make the Canadian postal service a Crown corporation under the name Canada Post.

What I said at the time in the Parliament of Canada on November 20, 1980 was that the bill gave the opportunity for change and more important, the opportunity for a new beginning. I described it then and I will describe it again today, almost 12 years later, as a leap of faith. The Parliament of Canada gave the Canadian postal service a new start, not knowing what the result would be.

What we did know was that the postal service was inadequate. There were complaints broadly, as I said, across the nation. There was an enormous deficit. Labour-management relations had been reduced to the lowest level possible and to put it in simplistic terms, the postal service was a shambles.

Whether the move to a Crown corporation called Canada Post was the solution or not, history will judge. It was an action that needed to be taken at the time. Even though I and my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party were in opposition, we supported the new arrangement.

• (1530)

We could call on the opposition—I suppose we have a right—to support new arrangements that have as their motive and their goal the improvement of the postal service across Canada.

That brings me to the challenge put forward by the opposition. It is to answer the question of whether this change is in the best interest of Canada.

Anybody who has looked at the postal service over the last decade and more and looked particularly at Canada Post since its statutory inception, will realize that at the heart of the difficulty is labour-management relations. That is the relationship of the management of Canada Post and the approximately 60,000 people who work for Canada Post. They have over the years distinguished themselves, both on the management side and on the labour side, as being unable to resolve their internal problems.

As a result, everybody in Canada suffers. If there is any technique or any action that can be taken to reverse this process which has been ongoing for several decades, then I believe that we should take that leap of faith and support that process.

I have no hesitancy in supporting Bill C-73 which brings a new breath of life into Canada Post by involving, in a very important and vital way, the labour force of Canada Post. It gives each person who works for Canada Post the opportunity to benefit by improvements.

What kind of benefits could arise from the new arrangement? We do not have to look inside Canada Post. We can look anywhere in Canada at the enormous growth in other areas of postal services. The companies that were instituted and established in Canada in the past decade were really substitutes for Canada Post. All of the services that are a day-to-day occurrence in business offices, commercial offices and professional offices across Canada really avoid the use of Canada Post. There are courier services and parcel post deliveries. The magnitude of these developments is tremendous.