

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Andre: Dalkeith. The hon. member thinks that we should not allow the post office management to operate in Dalkeith and that we should impose our superior political judgment on the post office.

That kind of call is understandable, but it is the collective result of all that over decades that produced the catastrophic situation which existed in the post office in 1983-84, when it was running a \$500-million deficit. Think of that, Mr. Speaker, in terms of economic policy and social policy—\$500 million from the taxpayers to the users of the post office.

Eighty per cent of the post office's revenue comes from private sector business such as mass mailers, Visa cards, utility bills, and so on. We had a situation where the taxpayers were subsidizing business to the tune of \$500 million a year.

An hon. member: Oh, come on!

An hon. member: Shame!

Mr. Andre: The New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party say: "That that is quite all right. Is that not what governments are supposed to do? That is an acceptable price for the purity of a state-owned operation. What is a puny \$500 million of taxpayers' money if you are able to retain the purity of a system where the government runs things as opposed to the private sector."

I ask members of the New Democratic Party to look back in *Hansard* and they will see that their own members stated that the problem with the post office is political interference. They will see in the committee evidence the testimony of Shirley Carr and Jean-Claude Parrot saying: "Let management manage". It was on that basis that we unanimously said: "Yes, we should change the post office from a department of government to a Crown corporation so management could manage." Well, that is what we have been doing.

An hon. member: With success.

Mr. Andre: Yes, with success. In 1984 the government said to the post office: "Go manage. We will try to keep the political jackals off your back. We will try to prevent people from coming in and saying, 'No, no, no management.' You can manage, but not in Dubuc and not in—"—I am sorry, I keep forgetting the name of that village.

An hon. member: Dalkeith.

Mr. Andre: We said: "We will let the post office manage, but not in Dalkeith, and not in Dubuc". You cannot have it both ways.

Can someone go around and say anecdotally that the post office made an error here in this town and that town? Of course they can. Any group of people, and certainly an organization like the post office, makes mistakes. It will be the first to admit that. But, if one looks at the things it has done right versus the things it has done wrong, one reaches the inescapable conclusion that it is doing a whole lot more things right than wrong. The post office today is a whole lot better than it has been in the past.

Mr. Boudria: Why do you want to get rid of it then if it works so good?

Mr. Andre: The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell wants to know why we want to get rid of it if it is working so well. He said "good" but I will say "well". That is the American influence where they have given up adverbs entirely. We still use adverbs in Canada and we are determined to keep using adverbs in Canada!

Mr. Boudria: My English isn't too good but it's better than your French.

Mr. Andre: Your English is a lot better than some of those on American television whose English you are copying.

No decision has been taken in terms of privatizing the post office. That is a fallacy, that somehow there has been a decision taken. This committee did not recommend that tomorrow we start selling shares in Canada Post Corporation. The committee did not say that. The committee recognized the reality—if one cared to look at it—that things are different today than they were in the 1940s and 1950s and that the structure of a post office which was appropriate in the 1940s and 1950s is not appropriate today. Times have changed. They are changing.

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Those rural post offices, which people talk about in terms of some mystic influence bewildering to the people who actually live in those communities, are a part of the past. Today, when someone gets into their car—be it from a farm, a suburban area, or from a downtown area—to go to do their personal business, they drive to a