

If the Government was committed to a strong, well-populated rural area with active, spirited people, it would ensure primary producers an adequate return for their labours and it would ensure that the community infrastructure remained in place. The heart of that infrastructure in many cases is the rural post office. The most obvious detrimental effect to life in rural Canada today, besides the disastrous lack of positive agricultural policies, is the Government's decision to cut back funding to the Post Office and its activities in rural Canada.

The new directive to Canada Post is to make money. It is the one government service that has been told to make money and, more important, to make profits. We do not expect the military to make profits nor the RCMP, medical clinics, the Law Reform Commission, the Farm Credit Corporation, universities or hospitals. They do not have to make profits and we should not expect them to. They provide services to Canadian people in areas where people need services. They respond to the needs of Canadian people. That is what Canada Post is there to do and that is what Canada Post has to do. Yet this Government has decided that the Post Office should make a profit. The one government service that touches the lives of all Canadians in every community for their entire lives is supposed to make a profit. We know that the cut-backs from that directive will have their most serious effects in rural Canada.

Thank God for rural community spirit. We would not be here today if it were not for that dogged determination of the rural spirit, never say die. It is the pioneering spirit that built our towns and villages in the past and it is that spirit that will keep them going in the future, despite the efforts of this Government.

One can only hope that the Government will open its ears and accept the wishes, desires and dreams of the Canadian people that are being spoken to Members of Parliament right across Canada while they sit in coffee shops and kitchens and listen to real, ordinary Canadians. I have heard those desires throughout my constituency during the last three months. I trust that my contribution here today with the background of having talked to my constituents helps the Government to understand a little better the direction in which it should be headed.

The Address—Mr. Taylor

I look forward with great anticipation to the Government's Budget due for public attention on April 27. That Budget, I hope, will deliver some specifics that the Throne Speech does not deliver, specifics that tell us the direction in which we are headed and what it will cost us. I am afraid I do not expect very much, but I am looking forward, I hope, to a few surprises.

Mr. Hockin: Madam Speaker, I would like to join the House in congratulating the Hon. Member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake (Mr. Taylor) for his comprehensive remarks. I know that the Hon. Member will take his duties seriously, so let me take a minute to ask him three questions, not provocative ones, but ones that I feel he would like to answer.

First, I heard what the Hon. Member had to say on privatization. Is there any instance when he would support privatization of any public enterprise? I understand that one can take a particular example and argue against it. What I am in search of from his Party and from him are situations where it is wise to privatize. If it is never wise to privatize, then we have a member and a Party which is seriously out of tune with the times and even with other social democratic Parties.

• (1650)

Second, let me refer to our interest rates. I appreciate the Member's concern about The Battlefords—Meadowlake and other parts of Canada where high interest rates are particularly a problem. Was the Member suggesting that we should arbitrarily lower interest rates in a particular region and then subject the country, perhaps, and that region to an outflow of capital which would end up leaving even less investment resource in those regions than existed before the artificially lowering of interest rates?

Is he saying that the country as a whole should arbitrarily lower interest rates 2 per cent, 3 per cent or 4 per cent and trigger an outflow of capital from the country to jurisdictions that are paying market rates of interest? That is, in fact, the logical concomitant of what the Member is suggesting. I do want to probe the Member a bit to get his answer.

Finally, I know he is particularly interested in Native Economic Development Programs and as the Minister in charge of those I want to tell him, and I think he is aware of this, we had an intensive consultation process last year on how to redesign the program. I hope he heard in the Speech from the Throne that the present NEDB pro-