

*Government Orders*

I have another one from Hare Bay, which is in my riding. Let me read what a gentleman from Hare Bay said. He wrote me on June 7, a Mr. Saunders. He said: "Mr. Mifflin, I am very disturbed about the way Canada Post is treating rural Canadians with regard to the closing of small post offices. I would appreciate you taking a firm stand against this action on my behalf".

That is one letter. I have received over a hundred of these, from a hundred communities. I have 260 communities in my riding and they are all rural communities.

With respect to Canada Post and rural communities, let me say what has happened.

In 1986 Canada Post had a 10-year corporate plan and the development of that would close, amalgamate or privatize 5,221 rural post offices employing 10,000 people across this country. This is a time when we are looking for jobs. In my riding a steady job is a status symbol, not many people have one. The last time I checked the figures, over 900 post offices were closed, with a corresponding loss of over 3,000 jobs.

We talk about equity here; 83 per cent of the rural post office positions belong to women, and the job losses have hurt them the most. In addition, closing a post office in a rural area removes in many cases, as the hon. member for Cardigan just said, the only federal presence in the community, and it terminates an essential ingredient in their social fabric, not the least of which is the consideration for our senior citizens who now have to go out in the rain and in the wind and in the snow. Again, the example that my hon. colleague from Cardigan used. I have many examples of them, Madam Speaker.

The name of the game is service to the public. Canada Post is trying to make profits. In the fiscal year of 1988-89 it made a profit of \$96 million. The next year, \$149 million. It is like charging for national defence. Do we have to make money because we need to have a defence department? No. The name of the game is to defend our country. You do not expect to get money back from it. The name of the game for Canada Post should be service to the Canadian public.

Judging from the information that I am getting, this service is anything but good. Why? The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources had to resort to a private company outside the country so that he could get reliable

service. He said so last Friday. That is an awful state of affairs.

There are other initiatives that this government has announced that this policy of what it is doing now is totally against the Affirmative Action for Women and Youth. I just stated that 83 per cent of the rural post office jobs are held by women.

Conditions for seniors for autonomous living. This does not help seniors who live alone, or to live without help. What does this do to regional economic development? Not very much.

To really put this in perspective, these are the words of Prime Minister Mulroney who made this promise in 1984: "Restoring the quality of service will become top priority with Canada Post".

**An hon. member:** Another sacred trust.

**Mr. Mifflin:** That is a sacred trust. It has gone the way of other sacred trusts. Therefore, I believe that this post office bill is inconsistent with government policies in other areas and the government admits it.

Second, this bill results in the loss of badly needed jobs, especially for women. Third, and we have ample evidence here today and even from the government side of the House, it degrades the quality of service for the public. Fourth, it trades off profit for poorer service and it represents the breaking of another sacred trust by the Prime Minister.

Is there any wonder that constituents are concerned about what their future holds? Is there any wonder that anywhere from 500 to 1,000 people will demonstrate in Random Square Mall in Clarendville tomorrow? I do not think there has ever been a demonstration there since the mall was built. Is it any wonder why they are going there to cry out to get some attention from the media and from anybody who will listen when they say: "Our voices are not being heard". The voices of the people from St. Anthony are not being heard so they turn to their members of Parliament to say: "Help us. Pay attention to us. Come down and watch this".

I would be down tomorrow but I feel that I can do better here with my colleagues trying to talk some sense into this government to at least hear what the fishermen and plant workers have to say. They have the prospect of their industry being closed down for five years—