

Government Orders

U.S. border. If it does not bring in that legislation, another bit of Canada goes down the drain.

If I can make any contribution in this speech, and I do not want to repeat everything that has been said before, I just want to emphasize. Be Canadian, Mr. Prime Minister. You say you love Canada. Show it.

I do not think we should play games and waste time with a private member's bill for that important legislation. I am tossing a challenge to the government to bring in a government bill to protect the post offices across this country.

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest and some fascination to the hon. member's comments.

During the period of time that I was chairman of the House of Commons consumer and corporate affairs committee we conducted a study into the history and the future of Canada Post and the postal service in this country.

I recall distinctly two of the witnesses who appeared before the committee were historians. They had recently completed a study on the history of mail delivery and mail service in Canada.

I was struck by the fact that the vast majority of postal outlets historically in Canada were located in private enterprises. They were located either in people's homes or general stores, almost without exception in rural Canada.

Canada Post in its former incarnation as a department of the federal government almost without exception in small communities operated in the private sector. It was only in a few of the large Canadian cities that there were what we would now term to be corporate-owned postal outlets, in other words buildings erected by the Government of Canada, or the governments of Upper or Lower Canada at the time, and operated by those governments.

So I think the member is really not being true to his history when he talks about the need to preserve government-owned post offices because they are historic monuments. Well, history does not bear that out.

Canada Post in its former incarnation started out in the private sector providing services to small communities in storefronts and in people's homes. It is an interesting devolution that has gone on where again Canada Post is abandoning a philosophy of having a large corporate-owned structure and going back into the small

enterprises, which often and ironically are open for longer hours and provide better service.

I am wondering if the member could give us his comments on that piece of history?

Mr. Flis: I do not know who these historians were but I am sure their research must have been dependent on what period of Canada's history they were looking at. If you go back far enough in the history of our postal service, you go back to the pony express. Now, I am not asking that the pony express be reincarnated here. But I am asking that our heritage be preserved through all the stages of history, from the pony express to priority post today, which cannot deliver a letter for me on a long weekend.

• (1340)

A year ago today I went to the local post office to send a letter to Ottawa. The recipient did not have a fax or anything fancy, but I had to get the letter there for Monday. I went into the post office late Friday. The post office apologized because Saturday the workers were gone, Sunday nothing moved and Monday was a holiday. The postal workers told me to go to a private postal delivery service to deliver my letter from Toronto to Ottawa.

This is indeed ironic when we hear the minister and other members boasting about how efficient the system is now. That is how efficient it is.

The hon. member who spoke earlier this morning talked about finding mail in the swamp. I sent out a lot of letters one December and two never arrived. A year later, two of those letters were returned to me in Ottawa. I guess those letters were floating in the swamp that the hon. Conservative member was talking about. Let us not play games.

Getting back to the heritage of Canada, I am glad the hon. member is interested in this. Maybe he can convince his Prime Minister and his ministers responsible to bring in such legislation. Knowing how aggressive he is, maybe he will do it himself.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, I was interested to hear my colleague in his opening comments in response to the New Democratic member from the Toronto area in a neighbouring riding where he said that he used to share television time with him. I do not think he realized this, but the member said he used to work for Continental Can for 21 years and the member for Parkdale—High Park said that he quickly canned those shared television meetings. I did not know whether he