

Government Orders

I would like to have the member's thoughts on that.

Mr. Nystrom: I suppose our country is in a fair amount of trouble. It is going through a real crisis right now in terms of unity.

The point that I made is it is not just the flag. The post office is the only federal institution, the only federal presence in a small community, and once that is gone it is gone. I think that is a point we should take into consideration.

In terms of efficiency, a lot of these post offices are efficient. Some are in very small hamlets and very, very small villages where they have to be subsidized. Again, should people be penalized because they live in a small village or a small hamlet or on a farm that is serviced by a small village or a small hamlet? I do not think they should be penalized. I think they should be subsidized to get the same kind of service people are getting in the rest of the country.

That being said, a lot of these post offices are efficient, are making money, are in larger communities, have modern facilities and are being run in a very competent way. In my own riding, for example, as I said already, the town of Kamsack with over 3,000 people plus in a large rural community, has many, many, many hundreds of patrons. It is an operation that is efficient or should be efficient because the economy of scale is there. There is no reason to close that. The people of the town want that particular post office. The same is true of many other communities in my riding and right across the country, communities that are large enough to have efficient operations that are a service to the community.

In terms of the member from across the way from Ontario, when he talks about the drop-in centre or the community centre aspect of the post office, if he understood rural Canada he would realize how important that is, a place where people can come together on a Saturday morning or come together every day and meet their neighbours and converse and compare notes and just be part of the community.

It is a bit different in a large urban centre. There is a different psychology altogether. One of the problems of this country is we do not realize what the popular culture is in terms of its differences from one part of the country to the other. The post office is a very near and dear thing to the people of rural Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Comments are now terminated. Under Standing Order 74, the 39 minutes of debate are now concluded, and we are going to commence 10 minute maximum speeches.

Mr. Ken Hughes (MacLeod): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to offer some comments on this particular bill and to respond to some of the comments that have been made earlier as well. Bill C-73 will enable Canada Post Corporation to create an employee share ownership plan for all of its 57,000 employees.

This legislation will allow the Crown corporation to do several things. It will allow it to continue to improve its service to the people of Canada and to do so at reasonable and competitive rates.

Second, it puts its present and future employees on an even footing with the employees of other enterprises in the communications and distribution industry, particularly those of competitors who offer employees a piece of the action as a way of building an *esprit de corps* and thereby providing the incentive for increasing profitability.

Third, hopefully this will help set the stage for improved employee-management relations and thereby reduce the likelihood of disruptions in the postal service. We all find it very frustrating when some major important services like the postal service are disrupted by labour-management disputes.

All members of the House and indeed all Canadians are aware that there have been in the past labour-management conflicts at Canada Post. Despite many years and millions of dollars spent in contract negotiations with its union leadership, Canadians are still from time to time the unfortunate victims of these kinds of strikes.

Those disruptions have not only caused untold hardship to individual Canadians, they have also meant a dramatic loss of business to Canada Post. What is worse is a lot of that business does not come back to Canada Post once the strike is over. A lot of it stays with Canada Post competitors.

That means that even after the corporation weathers a strike, it comes back with a smaller share of the market. A smaller share of the market means that smaller profits or even a loss, as will be recorded by Canada Post for the year just completed, will occur and that occurred largely as a result of the strike last fall.