

*The Address—Mr. Taylor*

In my province, the provincial Government of Premier Grant Devine is so afraid of the word "privatization" that he has created an entirely new cabinet post. He would not call it the Department of Privatization but calls the Department of Public Participation in an attempt to cover up its real agenda, which is turning over resources and utilities to the private sector. I should mention that ordinary Saskatchewan residents, who will likely give Mr. Devine a retirement send-off soon, call this privatization initiative not privatization but piratization.

In any case, the Throne Speech of the Government insists on moving ahead with turning over public assets to the private sector. The Crown corporation that I am most concerned about, as this Party's Post Office critic, is the Post Office, a Crown corporation which is slowly, piece by piece, being privatized without public debate, without public input and without a public mandate of any kind.

Just today, I attended a press conference with the national president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Mr. Jean-Claude Parrot. He has called on this Government to initiate a royal commission into the operations of the Post Office. Things are so bad there that suicides have taken place. Mr. Parrot says that the workplace at Canada Post is like a powder keg waiting to explode. The only responsible course of action that the Government can take is to launch an investigation and do it immediately. I whole-heartedly support their call for a royal commission and applaud the courage of postal workers for the stance they have taken.

I just want to read briefly from the letter the postal workers sent to the Minister responsible for Canada Post today. Mr. Parrot is quoted as saying:

The fuse is short and getting shorter. Management's abuse of workers has increased over the last year to a point where, if not stopped, the post office will blow apart. A public inquiry is the only way to expose what is really going on in the post office. It is the only way to make Canada Post management... accountable to the public. It is the only way to prevent all out chaos in the postal system.

He goes on in his letter to say:

Mr. Minister, in April 1989, it must be said that Canada Post Corporation has failed disastrously to fulfill the mandate granted it by Parliament in 1981. Service levels have declined to the point where Canada Post has become an object of ridicule and anger throughout Canada's communities. Labour relations have declined to the point where Canada Post's workers are treated by management, at best, as naughty children requiring constant discipline and surveillance, and at worst, as an enemy encampment requiring eradication.

He concludes:

A Royal Commission will clear the air and reveal for all to see the truth of what is happening in Canada Post. As well, it will serve to reestablish the legislative mandate of the Canada Post Corporation Act as the guiding light of the Corporation's activities and functions—a development which is crucial to postal workers and to service for Canadians.

This Government and specifically the Ministers responsible for Canada Post will hear a lot more from me about this subject in the near future. Let me flag a few things today in terms of the Throne Speech commitment to privatization.

During the election campaign in western Canada, there was a lot of talk among voters about the quality of life in rural Canada and that in recent years, that quality of life was diminishing. The closure or amalgamation of rural post offices, the reduction in rural postal routes and the elimination or downgrading of rural postal services are just more indications that the federal Government has no commitment to the existing quality of life in rural Canada.

This Government has a vision of rural Canada that is not the same vision that is shared by residents of rural Canada. It is not the same vision that our parents and our grandparents had when they settled in rural Canada. The vision of this Government is a rural Canada which responds to the needs of the market-place, and the market-place is demanding few people and fewer services in the rural areas of Canada.

We are already seeing a decay in rural life throughout Saskatchewan. Branch lines are gone, schools have closed, the hospital system is under review and post offices are closing. I recently visited the community of Leoville, a small community situated north of Spiritwood near the centre of my riding. There they have a deathly fear that their post office is being taken away from them. They are not interested in the conversion program proposed by Canada Post.

The president of the Leoville Chamber of Commerce and the owner-manager of the local grocery store tells me that they as a community have had to fight for everything that they have got. They are going to fight for this post office and it is right to fly the Canadian flag over a federal Government building in their community. I say bravo to Mr. Lalonde in Leoville and to municipal officials all across Canada who are willing to fight for what they believe in. I will be there for that battle in Leoville and any other place that comes along because I believe the direction being taken by Canada Post and endorsed by this Government is wrong.