

*Oral Questions***CANADA POST CORPORATION**

PROVISION OF SERVICE

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Post Office. Canadians want to know whether we have received from the Prime Minister not only a new Minister for the Post Office but also a new policy. Is the Minister now prepared to set aside the deadline of 1988 for financial self-sufficiency at the Post Office in the interests of good service, and is he ready now to put a stop to the plans of the Post Office to close hundreds of rural post offices?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, let me—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andre: I would find those congratulations more sincere, Mr. Speaker, if Members would not giggle.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): It is the kiss of death.

Mr. Andre: The Prime Minister has, indeed, given me a mandate to ensure that the progress made in the Post Office over the last few years is carried on, that we address the concerns of Canadians about the service they are receiving and that we do it in a responsible way. We cannot keep asking taxpayers, especially future taxpayers when we are in this deficit situation, to subsidize the cost of delivering the mail today. As I have indicated publicly, service is the first priority of the Government.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): A new beginning.

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister on acknowledging that service must be the first priority at the Post Office.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CORPORATION'S PLANS

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Does the Minister recognize, as was said yesterday, to clear up problems at the Post Office left by Michel Côté that we require—

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members will know that in this place we refer to Ministers as the Hon. Minister. Would the Hon. Member please put his question?

● (1450)

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, I was just quoting what the Minister said yesterday.

I just want to know whether he is prepared to acknowledge that in order to clear up the mess we require a change in the plans of the Post Office, and not just another pretty face in charge?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it has been a lot of years since I have been called pretty.

I must take exception to the comments made by the Hon. Member about my predecessor who did outstanding work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Andre: I think it is necessary that all Members recognize that we have a responsibility to ensure that the public gets reasonable service at an appropriate cost, and that the Post Office is run as efficiently and effectively as possible. Great progress has been made in the last two or three years through increased efficiency and lowering the relative cost of delivering letters. I hope we will all be able to co-operate and see that this progress continues and that people get the best service possible as cheaply as possible. I repeat, we cannot keep asking future generations to pay for the cost of delivering our mail today.

SUPERMAILBOXES—REQUEST FOR ABANDONMENT

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same Minister. I want to extend my congratulations on his appointment and wish him good luck.

He said yesterday in an interview that postal services are more important than the reduction of deficits. In view of that statement would the Minister immediately abandon the new plan, deliver the mail door-to-door, and scrap the supermailboxes?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I thank the Hon. Member for his expression of good luck. I will need a lot of that, looking back on the political success of past Ministers responsible for the Post Office.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andre: I was looking at the other side of the House.

Over the years the Post Office had reached a deplorable state. I think considerable progress has been made in the last few years and we want it to continue. There is more to be done. It requires the co-operation of all of us here who are, in the end, answerable to both the clients and the owners of the Post Office, the Canadian public. We cannot, for short-term political gains or headlines, make demands without taking into account the costs and consequences. I repeat: can we keep asking future generations to pick up the cost of delivering the mail today?