

Government Orders

[English]

Right now the people of Fournier have no idea whether they will have any place in the village where anyone will be selling stamps or any other postal service.

• (1550)

In 1985 or 1986 Canada Post adopted its five-year corporate plan. The plan called for the privatization—I am sorry, I should not have said that, Mr. Speaker, I apologize profusely—for the conversion of 5,221 rural post offices in Canada, all of them. That was the original plan.

The then member for Winnipeg and I cannot remember his riding, the late Dan McKenzie—

An hon. member: Winnipeg—Assiniboia.

Mr. Boudria: Winnipeg—Assiniboia I guess was the riding—protested this in the caucus of his party. The beleaguered minister responsible for Canada Post, Mr. Côté, walked out of the caucus room that day, pretty badly bruised by his colleagues, and came up with a compromise. He said he would not shut down the post offices in rural Canada, save and except when the postmaster resigned, retired, or died.

Canada Post looked at all that and said it could not really be called that because it was not nice. It said it was going to close down post offices—I am sorry—convert rural post offices when it had a natural opportunity. That is what it is called. Someone dies, I suppose that is natural. Someone retires, that is the process of aging, maybe that is natural too, and if someone quits I suppose not wanting to do something is probably natural as well. That is called a natural opportunity.

So it converted the postal delivery system when it had a natural opportunity. I want you to know you do not close down the post office when someone dies. It is not the same says Canada Post. Okay, so that worked for a while, the natural opportunity business.

But after a while Canada Post got fed up with rules. Well, rules are meant to be broken, Mr. Speaker, as some of the members across the way will probably know—I know, of course, being the objective, non-partisan person you are that you are above that—but the people across the way will know that rules are meant to be broken.

So Canada Post looked at this and said: “How can we cheat? Here is what we will do. We will go see a postmaster”, which it did again in my riding, and said: “Postmistress, tell us, you have worked around here for a long time. You are only 60 years old. You are really not 65 but how about going home? We will give you so many thousands of dollars and we can naturalize your opportunity right now”. So the postmistress was bought off and went away.

The member across might be wondering what is wrong with that. Simply that it is the opposite to what was promised by the government that this would not happen. You force someone to retire, or you intimidate them, then you offer them the money, then you make them quit and once they retire, forcefully or otherwise, you declare it a natural opportunity. You shut down the post office. That is what it has been doing all across rural Canada.

Mr. Tremblay (Lotbinière): If they quit, they quit. Do your own job.

Mr. Boudria: The member says if they quit they quit. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is very interesting. The member across the way, if he goes back to his riding every now and then surely must know that that is not how constituents feel.

[Translation]

I know Rural Dignity, I know the post offices that have been closed in Canada. I know what they and many people throughout Canada, including those in the riding of the hon. member who just made a remark, are demanding.

[English]

Let us get back to this privatization issue—I am sorry, the selling of shares to employees. You need the right euphemism, you know, because Canada Post would not like it and I certainly would not want to offend the people in the tower of Babel, the spaceship or whatever it is called, at Canada Post headquarters.

The Toronto Star wrote in an editorial on May 10, 1992, about the privatization—I am sorry—the selling of shares to employees the following. It is entitled “A new postal issue”:

If Canada Post Corp. thinks financial incentives would speed the mail and improve worker morale, maybe it ought to set up a profit-sharing plan.