

Private Members' Business

In the rural areas around Penticton the community of Naramata just recently had its post office closed. Rock Creek, a small community in the boundary country, had a post office until last year that was over 100 years old, almost 125 years old. Yet Canada Post does not care for history. Canada Post apparently does not care for service and Canada Post has not indicated that it cares very much for patriotism.

• (1935)

The member is on the right track in that he is trying to ensure we are at least keeping a little bit of our heritage, our culture and our patriotism in our small communities by saying that if people have a Canada Post outlet they should at least identify themselves as part of the Canadian mosaic, the Canadian culture, the string that keeps Canada together. I agree with that proposition.

Let me digress a little bit. We are saying that all postal outlets should be identified as Canada Post and Canadian outlets by the reason of the flag.

Let us go back to exactly what is happening. I recall when I was in business approximately eight years ago that across Canada we were assured of one-day service from major centre to major centre. I live in the small community of Osoyoos, British Columbia. I am a lawyer, and in sending our land registry documents to Kamloops we would put them in the mail at 2.30 in the afternoon. They would be delivered and we would have registration phoned back to us by eleven o'clock the following morning.

In the last year the people in my constituency have been keeping track of how long it takes to get mail from one community to the other. Just yesterday I received a letter from a constituent enclosing an envelope and his stamp received date on it from Kelowna to Penticton, 40 miles. It took eight days to deliver that piece of mail 40 miles.

That is not the only one. I had a phone call a few days ago telling of a letter that was sent from Summerland to Okanagan Falls, approximately 25 miles. It took 11 days to deliver that piece of mail the 25 miles. I just received some correspondence that was mailed six weeks ago in Vancouver, intercepted and re-sent by Canada Post to Ottawa. On a regular basis it takes from my office in Ottawa to my office in Penticton, British Columbia, 8 to 14 days to have mail delivered.

I look at it and say: What has Canada Post done? How is its service improved with the privatization of our small postal outlets?

We have not even taken baby steps forward. We have taken giant steps backward. We are worse off, I would suggest, than we were back in the pony express days. Speaking of pony express, we have gone back in my riding. The centre of Princeton, British Columbia has twinned with a community in the United States called Tonasket. Each year they have a pony express ride where they take letters from one community to the other. By horseback they get those letters between the two communities, some 150 to 180 miles, in approximately six hours. They are doing a lot better than Canada Post is with all of its modernization.

Canada Post has not done much for my constituents. It has closed post offices. It has taken away the identity of small communities. It has privatized areas, and I get complaints about that. There are some good retail outlets. I do not argue with the fact that often those retail outlets are kept open longer hours, but unfortunately those people are not bonded. Unfortunately those people often are not trained adequately to handle the mail.

There are 19,000 locations that should be covered. Perhaps flying the flag over one of these retail outlets would give the workers more pride in the work they do. They may already have three or four other jobs to do in a retail outlet. Perhaps it would give them extra incentive in getting the mail to people. Perhaps it would show Canada Post that we in Canada still care about Canadian culture, Canadian unity and that Canada Post is the bottom line entity in getting our mail from east to west.

• (1940)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have 22 minutes left and I have the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the hon. member for Broadview—Greenwood, and the hon. member for Mont Royal. Use discretion, please.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, let me begin my remarks by congratulating the member for Restigouche—Chaleur for his initiative this afternoon to ensure that the flag of Canada is displayed in post offices and in agencies providing postal services in Canada.