

Oral Questions

not force through trade legislation on the floor of the House, as the Minister says, within five days, until we have had a clear and unmistakable assurance that there is nothing in the U.S. trade Bill that will contravene that agreement or that will ask the Canadian Parliament to put at risk the sovereignty and security of this country, because the U.S. is taking major advantage without providing any kind of reaction or change by the Government? Why are you asking this Parliament to pass a blank cheque?

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McDermid: The Government is not doing anything of the sort. The Hon. Member in his preamble made three points. All of them were totally incorrect and misleading. He stands there and says that we are trying to ram through this legislation in five days.

Mr. Axworthy: Five days of debate, that is ramming through.

Mr. McDermid: In our system of Government, and the Hon. Member has been around here long enough to know, there are various steps that a Bill goes through. The first step is first reading, which we have had. The second step is second reading. Then it goes into committee, and then into report stage. That is not all taking five days.

The Hon. Member knows that and he should not be spreading that garbage around the country.

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CANADA POST CORPORATION

BLOOMFIELD STATION, N.B.—USE OF PROPANE TORCH TO OPEN SUPERMAILBOXES

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Canada Post. Yesterday, when my Leader asked the Minister responsible for the Post Office about the closure of the post office in Topley, British Columbia, the Minister responded by saying that the people served by these post offices are getting better service today, and that situation will continue in the future.

I want to ask the Minister today about Bloomfield Station, New Brunswick, where the post office was closed on October 31, 1987. The people of that community now have to travel 12 kilometres to another community to receive postal service. The Atlantic division of Canada Post has supplied to the contractor who delivers the mail to the superboxes a propane torch to be able to open those mailboxes when there is a north-east wind blowing.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Keeper: I would like to ask the Minister if that is his idea of better service for rural Canada.

• (1440)

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, since I did not get any prewarning of that question of course I cannot answer it. But I can answer about Topley, British Columbia, which matter was raised by his Leader yesterday.

The Postmistress sold the store which contained the post office to her daughter. Canada Post tried to get the daughter to accept a retail post office—

Mr. Broadbent: For \$1,200 a month less.

Mr. Andre: The daughter refused. On May 31, Canada Post signed to have a retail postal outlet with the Whispering Pines Motel. The service is to start July 1. In the interim the group mailbox service is being provided.

Previously in that post office it received revenues of \$8,000 a year but it was costing \$22,000 a year.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Andre: That kind of thing perhaps makes sense to the New Democrats, but it does not make sense to anybody with any common sense.

[Translation]

REQUEST THAT RURAL POSTAL SERVICE BE IMPROVED

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg—North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the Prime Minister, and it isn't funny.

When the Government has reached the stage where it is paying for full-page ads in the media to defend a postal policy that is a disaster for rural Canada, isn't it time to take the "torch" away from Calgary East and Canada Post and give rural Canada a decent chance of having a good postal service?

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I understand from press reports that the CLC has financial problems. It is having to lay off employees, something which Canada Post is not doing. In spite of that, the CLC is taking \$2 million of its members' fees and using that money on a campaign opposing Canada Post.

If the Hon. Member is really concerned about equity and fairness, he ought to come to the defence of the employees, the union members of the Post Office, whose moneys are being taken and inappropriately and quite possibly illegally being spent to harass the Post Office with these protests.

I can understand the Hon. Member's frustration because there have been a couple of polls in Manitoba, one in terms of users of franchise operations which shows a 94 per cent approval rating, and another poll of rural outlets which were converted to retail postal outlets where the approval rating is