

between cities. Instead of tackling that problem and finding out how to solve it the Government has watered down standards. Instead of same day delivery the Government has gone to second day delivery. The Government has sought to produce statistics of reliable service by watering down the service.

What we have is a government policy which is one of reduction in service, of increase in postal rates and of focusing on the deficit rather than on service. Service is what Canadians want. Over the last 20 years under Liberal and Conservative Governments the quality of the postal service has gone down.

But there is an alternative, Mr. Speaker. We should decide once and for all why we have a Post Office and recognize that it is a public service. We no more expect the Post Office to make a profit than we would to expect health care to make a profit or airports to make a profit. We subsidize the transportation industry which ties the nation together. It is legitimate to use taxpayers money to subsidize and pay for a public service. Why do we pay taxes if it not for public services? The Government wastes a great deal of money in certain areas. What about taxation write-offs? I am thinking about the closets of the Prime Minister, money that came out of public funds. What about the capital gains write-off that gives money to very high income earners? The Government wastes money but when it comes to a public service such as the Post Office, an essential communications service, a legitimate use of taxpayers' money, not much is done. Let us not run away from that. At the same time, let us enable the Post Office to compete in areas in which it can make a dollar, gain revenue and cross-subsidize. This is a policy common to transportation and communication systems in Canada and could work for the Post Office as well. There is an alternative to what the Government has proposed.

• (1240)

I would like to step back from this question and take a bird's-eye view of the politics of the situation. The Government is seeking to blame the unions for the lack of adequate postal service. By using the unions as a scapegoat, it is hoping to gain public approval. The Prime Minister is trying to play Ronald Reagan. He is trying to take on the big unions and whip them into line in order to gain public approval for himself. He is pretending to be the champion of the public when in fact he is avoiding the real issue. This approach will not provide the kind of service we need. By blaming the unions, the Government is trying to satisfy its back-benchers, those people who are willing to use the Post Office as a whipping boy.

Canadians want results. They want good postal service. They want their mail to be delivered on time. They want the same kind of service as their neighbours receive. They want rural communities to be supported rather than undermined by reductions in postal service. Canadians want the Government to take a problem-solving approach to postal service rather than one of blame. They want the Government to look seriously at the Post Office and to establish a bottom line for service, the kind of service Canadians want. Canadians want

### *Supply*

the Government to structure the postal service so it can be paid for adequately, recognizing that it is a public service.

Once again we find ourselves addressing the question of postal service because nothing has changed since the last time we addressed it. Nothing has changed because of the lack of leadership of a Government that is seeking to take us down the garden path. The Minister responsible for the Post Office has become a Pied Piper who is singing a sweet tune but is not delivering the mail.

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper) talked about fairness. I would like to make a comment or two and then ask him a question.

In my riding there are hundreds of farmers who have to drive anywhere between one mile and 25 miles to get their mail. They do so at their own expense. If they do not want to stand in line at the post office or if they want to get their mail after hours, they have to pay \$10 or \$15 per year for a box.

In my riding, there are hundreds of people who live in towns and villages and have to walk to the post office. If they do not want to stand in line or if they want to get their mail after hours, they too have to pay \$10 or \$15 each for a box.

There is a city in my riding of about 11,000 people called Airdrie. It is located on both sides of the main highway going through that area. Nobody there gets their mail delivered. They have to go either to the main post office or to the sub-post offices to pick up their mail. Again, if they do not want to stand in line or if they want to pick up their mail after hours, they have to pay \$10 or \$15 for a box.

There are about 7,000 people in the City of Drumheller and the rural population around the City of Drumheller is another 5,000 or 6,000. They too have to pay for boxes. They do not get their mail delivered to their homes.

When the Hon. Member is talking about fairness, I wonder how he rationalizes the fact that thousands of Canadians get their mail delivered right to their homes without paying one cent. They do not have to pay for boxes, nor do they have to pay extra taxes for that service. It is an extra service. Is that fair?

Is the Hon. Member prepared to try to make the situation fair by recommending that all city dwellers pay \$10 or \$15 per year so that they are paying the same as people in rural areas? We talk so glibly about fairness, but I would like to hear the NDP Member indicate how fair he is prepared to be. Is he prepared to recommend that city residents who get mail delivered right to their homes pay \$10 or \$15 each per year?

**Mr. Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the Hon. Member's question because I think it is a good one. What I find unfair about what the Government is doing right now is that it is cutting back on rural postal service in different ways than it is cutting back in urban areas. However, the common element is a watering down of service.