

*Routine Proceedings*

Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

As I already indicated, there is a problem with taking the testimony of the witnesses and putting it into the recommendations. We had no evidence, when writing the report, that the mandate given to Canada Post in 1981 was inadequate to meet the postal service needs of Canadians.

• (1120)

As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, in 1981, Parliament passed an act and gave a mandate to Canada Post that set the direction it was to follow. That mandate was quite clear: Meet the service needs of Canadians and try to be self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency does not, in the interpretation of most Canadians, mean showing a profit or making a return on investment to the government, its current shareholder.

The mandate of Canada Post, as described by many witnesses before the committee, was quite clear. The mandate was adequate to meet the needs of Canada Post, to meet the needs of government, to meet the needs of its workers, and to meet the needs of Canadians, whether they be in the urban setting and are now subjected to the supermailboxes, or whether they be in the rural setting where we are finding post office closures.

We did not have any evidence to conclude that the mandate was incorrect. We also did not have much evidence to support some of the contentions that were made in the report, particularly dealing with the rural side of Canada Post and the needs of rural Canadians to be able to get the mail service they deserve. Rural route service people were ignored entirely by the majority committee report.

The other oversight the committee made was its failure to recognize that as Canada Post is moving into the private sector. It is turning a lot of rural post offices and suburban post offices over to the private sector and individuals operate those private sector post offices. Canada Post calls them retail postal operators or retail postal outlet operators. Those RPOs are the subject of disagreement among large numbers of Canadians, particularly on the rural side.

Not once did this committee call before it for testimony an operator of a retail postal outlet, the people who

are supposed to deliver the mail in rural Canada. I think that was a tremendous oversight. Under no circumstances could this committee rightly argue or set out in a report that the RPOs are operating, not only efficiently, but correctly and within the needs of the communities they are servicing. I believe very strongly in the right of rural Canadians to be able to get as good a service from the Canada Post Corporation, a Crown corporation, as do people in urban centres.

The main promise of the report is privatization and the selling of shares over the course of the next couple of years if Canada Post meets some of the standards it is trying to set for itself. Those are the standards which will lead to more post office closures, less letter carrier service, and less service to Canadians. Privatization was the main bone in this report.

What is the purpose of privatization? What is the reason, not only the government, but this committee is moving toward the privatizing of this Crown corporation? We have a very great need in this large country of ours to ensure that communication fairness exists in all parts of this country.

The privatizing of this corporation was not something about which we heard a great deal of testimony in committee. The minister alluded to it. The president of the corporation said they were not ready for it. We did not have definitions presented to us. We did not have any of the claims that Canada Post presented to us verified by independent witnesses. We never called before us the polling firms that do all of the work that Canada Post relies on for its public image. We did not have any of the individuals who are responsible for setting the direction of Canada Post called before us.

We had very loose statements by the minister that indicated he would like to move in that direction. But we had no evidence at all that the privatizing of one of our most essential Crown corporations would be in the interests of the Canadian people or in the interests of the communication system of the country, not to mention the major mail users who, in a sense, make up about 80 per cent of the volume of the Crown corporation.

The idea that Canada Post needs more money is the reason for selling shares in Canada Post as the means to privatize it. What evidence do we have that Canada Post is in need of more capital? We heard not too long ago in the House the government's desire to sell Petro-Can-