

Senator Smith: I did not ask what the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said, with respect, honourable senators. I asked for the disclosure of a simple fact—whether the Government of Canada approved this purchase or whether it did not.

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, I gave that reply because it is more accurate than any other reply I could give, because obviously the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources speaks for and on behalf of the government when he comments on such matters.

Senator Flynn: That does not mean he says everything.

Senator Smith: That does not mean that he received the formal approval, or that the government approved the purchase.

I do not know what all this beating around the bush is about. My question is a simple one; it is a perfectly straightforward question. I am being factual and am not being hypothetical, and there is no question of opinion. Did or did not the government approve the purchase?

Senator Olson: Perhaps Senator Smith does not understand the beating around the bush, but I can tell him, Senator Flynn and Senator Murray that I understand what the beating around the bush is all about. Therefore, I am being extremely careful and accurate in the responses I am giving.

Senator Smith: I have not heard a response to my question yet.

Senator Murray: The scandalous thing is that he does not know the answer.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

DEFINITION OF "LETTER"

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I should like to refer to another matter, namely, the definition of "letter" as perceived by the Canada Post Corporation. I note that the cabinet has decided to reject the definition that has been received.

My question has to do with the procedure that will be followed from now on. I have been attempting to obtain information as to the objections or comments that have been made by various parties respecting the first definition which was offered. I believe the first definition was amended in some respects. I do not know what the definition is that the Governor in Council has ultimately decided to reject, but I should like to know whether the minister can tell me what the procedure will now be, apart from referring the matter back to the Canada Post Corporation.

Will there be an opportunity for interested parties to know what is in the proposed new amendment before it is proceeded with; will there be an opportunity for the members of this chamber to find out what the representations were; and will the government inform the chamber as to what the new suggested amendment is?

Hon. H. A. Olson (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators—

[Senator Olson.]

Hon. Lowell Murray: He does not know.

Senator Olson:—Senator Roblin is aware that there was a precedent set in that the proposed regulations concerning the Canada Post Corporation will require 60 days' notice before being approved by the Governor in Council and becoming effective.

To answer the first part of his question, I am not aware of any change in the process that has been established and, indeed, practised with regard to regulations of the Canada Post Corporation.

Senator Roblin: What I have been trying to get my honourable friend to consider is the possibility that the government might be willing to make known to the public, who will be asked to pay the bill, exactly what it is the Canada Post Corporation is now recommending, and if the government will be willing to make available to the public—who have a general interest in this thing—what the general representations were that were made in respect to this matter. It ultimately leads to the conclusion that the present system with respect to this is so unsatisfactory, as has been proven by current events, that the government would be well advised, in my view, to consider the possibility of having some kind of parliamentary or public review of this matter. I have made this appeal on numerous occasions, but now that the government is back to square one with Canada Post, would they not be kind enough to consider the advisability of some method of public ventilation of this matter so that it can be dealt with in an open framework and so that all those concerned can take part in that process?

● (1415)

Senator Olson: Honourable senators, the implication is that it is not an open process, and I cannot accept that. It was known some time ago—in fact, more than 60 days ago—what the definition of "letter" was to be, according to the submission that was made by the Canada Post Corporation for ratification by the Governor in Council. I expect that that process will be followed again whenever Canada Post is ready to put forth a substitute or another definition of "letter".

The next question that Senator Roblin was asking was whether or not there could or would be parliamentary debate, in one form or another, on that subject, and I will convey his views about that. I am not in a position now to give any undertaking that there will be that kind of debate. However, I cannot agree that it is not open, because it is known 60 days before ratification.

Senator Roblin: May I try to explain to my honourable friend some of my concerns with regard to this matter? It is open insofar as the Canada Post Corporation has to publish in the *Canada Gazette* its new definition when the time comes. What is not open is the bargaining process for changes that goes on between the interested parties in the industry and the Governor in Council. That is highly confidential, as far as I can ascertain. I have been asking my honourable friend, to no avail, to table the documents affecting those suggestions for changes in the definition. Therefore, it seems to me it is definitely not open. I think there is a large element of public