

Government Orders

It is totally unforgivable and totally unacceptable in a time of high unemployment and a time when people have to be mobile to seek employment elsewhere that they have to be punished. In fact, I see this move of having to pay the additional 43 cents for a stamp for people who are out looking for jobs elsewhere as another tax on the poor and on the unemployed.

I would like to ask the hon. member who spoke this. How does he believe the government can justify such a move when, I believe, Canada Post is one of the Crown corporations that is doing very well? In fact, I have heard this mentioned numerous times in different debates and different speeches made by ministers of the Crown, as well as members of Parliament and the public at large who have concerns regarding Canada Post.

• (1035)

How can it justify this move and other moves that it has made while there are still reams of people who are not getting the proper service and when it is able to turn over a profit, when it is able to have revenues? How can it justify a move like that to pay for redirected mail when this Crown corporation is reputed to be doing so well? Why is it being so greedy? Why is it mismanaging those revenues so that it again has to tax and punish the unemployed and the poor of this country?

Mr. Taylor: Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the question. The issue that the member raised concerning redirected mail is one that has been bothering me since I first heard about it on February 17.

As my friend from Chambly mentioned, it is a matter that punishes Canadians in a way that no government should even attempt. Forty-three cents does not sound like much. The government and Canada Post—I do not think we should distinguish between the two as they are virtually one and the same when we look at the bottom line—are asking a simple thing of Canadians, they think: If people get a letter that is not theirs and they have to drop it back in the mailbox with another address on it then they must put a new stamp on it.

That does not sound unreasonable except when we consider that people may not want to send the letter on.

They do not want to walk down to the post office and buy that 43-cent stamp for this person who they might not even know. That letter may end up in a person's mailbox and it might contain a letter from Revenue Canada that says the recipient of the letter is supposed to pay some big bill or get stiffed with further penalties from the government. It might be a letter advising of a refund, or it might be a letter advising of the passing of a relative and the notice of the reading of the will and the estate. There could be any number of important things that go beyond the simple 43 cents.

It is not just a matter of somebody trying to rip off the system, and this is another case in which the victim is being blamed by this government, that there may be people who try to take advantage of the situation by moving and asking their relatives to readdress their mail for them rather than paying the fee for redirecting their mail. It goes much beyond this situation.

The member's question was: How can I justify this? I cannot and I will not justify what this government is trying to do on this matter which I do not agree with at all.

In trying to justify this the minister responsible for Canada Post the day after, February 18, said in this House that it was justified because it could save millions of dollars within the corporation. When the corporation is expecting to earn a profit of \$130 million or more this year, this is not the time for the corporation to be looking at trying to increase those millions of dollars, especially when the mandate of the corporation is quite simply to provide a service and provide self-sufficiency, which in my book means breaking even. If it collects the same amount of money that it spends then that is the bottom line. If it makes money over and above that then it has gone beyond the line.

Ask the employees of Air Canada who purchased shares in their corporation what they think about employee share offerings. The employees of Air Canada today are seeing that the shares they purchased are down in the dumps.