

Canada Post Corporation

when the mail bears the full residential address of the individual requesting the mail. The response was "I am informed by the Canada Post Corporation as follows, under the following conditions: prohibitory order, postage due unpaid, letters in customs, and non-mailable matter under the prohibited mail regulations." Obviously, it did not include any mail directly addressed to me. I am supposed to get it free of charge.

Two local residents of Hudson, Mrs. Margaret Clarke and Mrs. Bette Thomas, also wrote to the president of the post office at that time and asked him a couple of questions. They asked, "Who is suddenly responsible for imposing these changes in a system which has been working satisfactorily without them? Have you thought of the consequences if everyone opts for general delivery at the post office?" The cost to deliver mail to individual residents in 1979—again the answer to a question on the Order Paper—was \$73 per annum. Obviously, in 1982 we are talking about a figure of approximately \$100. Thus, anyone who is not entitled to receive his mail at his residence, like we who live in Hudson, is saving the post office \$100 per annum.

Now, there is no charge for mail delivered to an apartment box, for example. The post office decided to get back at us in a rather ingenious fashion. Listen while I read a letter which I wrote to the president of the Canada Post Corporation on July 14, 1982. I said:

Last week, my wife advised me that she had been asked to sign a document at the Post Office and then pay \$1.50 a month in order to receive our mail.

This was at the counter, mind you. I went on to say:

I told her NOT to sign, and NOT to pay.

Today, a blind resident of Hudson who collects his mail at the counter has reported a similar extortion attempt at the Hudson Post Office.

I used the word "extortion". Imagine, a blind resident who cannot use the post office box and who has been obliged, for all the years I have been in the House, to pick up his mail at the counter, is now asked to pay \$1.50 a month for that privilege!

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Herbert: The response from the president was that there were some overzealous employees and that there is now no problem.

Mr. Guilbault: Six and five would cure that.

Mr. Herbert: If one decides to pick up one's mail at the counter, there are several factors involved, of course. First of all, if one picks up one's mail at the counter, then the employees must have some distribution system on site in order to sort the mail. The post office boxes themselves are a very effective means of sorting. The employees can sort all day every day. There is no pressure on them. If the counter service is heavy, they can leave sorting for a while and I find this, of course, to be a great convenience for the post office. If people decide to pick up their mail at the counter, then it is obvious that some sorting mechanism will have to be provided within the post office.

However, there is another little fly in the ointment here. That is what made me mad. I was waiting for my own household to be delivered, and I send out about 40,000 every three months. I use the one that I receive at my own address as a check on the distribution, but it did not arrive. I inquired and I was told, "Oh, that is because you get your mail at the counter; that is general delivery". I asked, "What difference does that make? Am I not entitled to get one of my own mailers and is everyone else who picks up at the counter not entitled to get one of my mailers?" I was told, "What we do with the ones that are left over is to leave them in a stack at the side and if we think about it, we pass one across the counter; but, of course, we do not want to give anyone more than one." I understood that. I was told, "So in your case we thought that maybe you had already received one and that is why we did not include one in your mail." The point is that these are not distributed on a regular basis. The post office does not automatically distribute them. I know it is not first class mail. But my mailer, and this applies to all the rest of the mail which is put in the post office for distribution to all householders, is not distributed on a formal basis. It is very haphazard. We may or may not receive it, depending upon the day or the time we pick up our mail.

I should point out, also in answer to a question on the Order Paper, that there are some two million Canadians who do not receive either door-to-door or rural roadside mail delivery service. That amounts to something under 10 per cent of our population. Post office boxes in use in this country number something just over 1.5 million. Persons receiving their mail by general delivery amount to something under half a million. However, of the post office boxes, one must make another subdivision because in the figures in answer to a question it was shown that 834,000 of these boxes are for individuals who are not entitled to residential delivery service. In other words, approximately half of these people are not entitled to residential delivery and half choose to have a box as a convenience.

● (1720)

I understand the deficit at the post office this year will exceed \$400 million. By the time the figures are in, the chances are we will be talking about half a billion dollars. There are some 60,000 employees of the post office, and it is interesting that of the total post office cost 72 per cent is for personnel costs and benefits, including all labour and wage-related items. Therefore, theoretically the post office should be very interested in means by which it can cut down its staff. But it certainly will not cut its staff; it will increase its staff if there is an increasing number of persons like me who get fed up with what we consider unnecessary increases in charges for post office boxes and decide to pick up their mail at the counter.

It is also interesting—and, I think, relevant—to look at the breakdown of the use of the post office. Eighty per cent of mail is business mail and, of the remaining 20 per cent, 8 per cent of total mail is mail from individuals to individuals and 12 per