PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to provisional standing order 39A, to inform the house that the questions to be raised at the time of adjournment tonight are as follows: The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis)—Consumer Affairs—report respecting grocery prices on prairies; the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles)—Public Service—superannuated federal employees—request for increased pensions.

It being six o'clock, pursuant to the order of the house I do now leave the chair.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at 8 p.m.

POST OFFICE ACT

AMENDMENTS AFFECTING RATES, ADMINISTRATION, SAVINGS BANK

The house resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Kierans for the second reading of Bill No. C-116, to amend the Post Office Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie).

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, reflecting over the adjournment period I have come to the conclusion, having listened carefully to the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and to the suggestion of His Honour that while it might be possible for me to abandon the phraseology of my amendment, in doing so I should not abandon the principle nor my purpose. I would beg Your Honour's leave and that of the house to substitute for the discussed amendment an amendment in the following terms:

That Bill C-116 be not now read a second time but that the subject matter thereof be referred to the standing committee on transport and communications.

I so move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the house ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie) wishes to speak.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on the post office bill, along with other hon. members I am greatly concerned about the changes in rates in the bill and also in the reduction of services that it proposes. I come from a riding that is largely rural in nature; therefore the reduction in services is of prime importance and the rate structure is also of great interest, particularly for farm magazines, periodicals and local papers.

In discussing the various forms of communication it would be unfair to attempt to separate post office communication from other forms of communication such as the telephone, telegraph, radio, television, etc. To some extent the post office has competed with other forms of communication, and I think this is more evident with the telephone especially. A great deal of business is still transacted by letter and much communication is still carried forward in this way, but alternatively much of this communication can be carried out by telephone, such as the placing of business orders, and so on. The written word has the advantage of being exact and subject to copy in a permanent record. Although the cost of a business letter is not inconsiderable, it is an acceptable means of business communication and as such is very valuable.

If the five day week promotes the use of alternative means of communication, particularly in the business world, the post office may lose business that it may never recover. I feel that the five day week will cause some reduction in the efficiency of our industrial and economic machine. In this day, when Canadians are facing ever increasing government expenditures, when we as a nation are embarking upon ever expanding social programs for the benefit of our people and we are being exhorted to increase the productivity of our industrial and agricultural apparatus, it seems to me that we should look with extreme care to not diminishing the means by which the nation carries on its business.

In view of the fact that the post office has a virtual monopoly in the distribution of mail,