

Adjournment Debate

● (1815)

At the same time as these improvements have been implemented, Canada Post has gone through a period of downsizing. One thousand vacant positions have not been filled in the past two years. As I just indicated, in the same period, 2,000 employees have left the Corporation through normal and accelerated attrition. I might add that this has not been at the expense of those employees actively involved in moving the mail. The administrative and management group which has been criticized as being top heavy has been reduced by 10 per cent. Senior management, in fact, has been reduced by some 26 per cent.

Non-salary expenses have also been remarkably contained. Through strict control, these expenses have only been raised by \$5 million. I note that inflation alone would have added \$50 million in itself.

Canada Post is a business, of course, and like all businesses the heart of its financial structure is in revenue. In the same two-year period we have been discussing, Canada Post increased its revenue by some 15 per cent. Although the Corporation did raise its rates in June of last year, 60 per cent of this increase in revenue is directly linked to sales growth and other factors.

I do not mean to bombard my hon. colleagues with figures, I simply want to point out that there is much evidence that Canada Post Corporation has begun its much needed turn-around.

The past few years should give us confidence that breaking even can be achieved and should give us reason to look forward to the corporate plan when it is introduced tomorrow.

Perhaps I can suggest that we applaud the Post Office instead of bashing it.

ABORTION—COLLECTION OF STATISTICS

Mr. John Oostrom (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, in August of this year Statistics Canada announced in a letter to health care administrators that it will no longer compile statistics on therapeutic abortions in Canada. The decision was taken to cease funding for the collection and analysis of abortion statistics as part of an over-all expenditure reduction. Statistics Canada is now processing 1985 abortion data, however it has stated that 1986 data already gathered will not be processed.

When I questioned the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada last week, I was told that meetings were being held between Statistics Canada and officials of the Department of National Health and Welfare, and that the Minister was awaiting a report from this group. There were indications at that time from the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) that his Department could compile statistics on abortion from medicare payments to doctors.

It is incredible that it is not a priority of our national statistical record-keeping agency to keep statistics on abortion which is the most controversial social issue facing Canadians

today. Surely an agency that can tell us how many bathrooms there are in this country should be able to tell us how many unborn Canadians are killed by abortion each year.

The suggestion that the Department of Health and Welfare gather abortion data from provincial medicare payments simply will not work. In 1977, the committee on the operation of the abortion law, under Chairman Robin Badgley, stated that:

Provincial medicare insurance commissions maintain information on the procedures paid for under existing fee payment schedules for physicians. Because there are sizeable variations between the provinces in how procedures are classified for payment, and in particular, how these relate to induced abortion, no uniform summary from these sources can be made for the country.

I submit that in order to properly compile and analyse the data needed to provide the level of information now published under the therapeutic abortion program, the Department of National Health and Welfare would in fact need to duplicate the services and expertise now available from Statistics Canada, with the result being no cost saving to the taxpayers of Canada at all.

We need to know more, not less, about abortion if we are to resolve this social dilemma. We need to tell Canadians that one in five women seeking abortion is in fact seeking a second or third abortion. We need to tell Canadians that nearly 200 babies killed each year in Canadian hospitals are over 20 weeks of gestation. In order to absorb the ghastly statistics, we need to realize that 10 times the number of Canadians have been killed in the womb than in war. We need to wonder why one out of every four children conceived in the Province of British Columbia is aborted.

● (1820)

The information published each year by StatsCan has provided us with gruesome but necessary information on the practice of abortion in this country. We are able to assess the ages of the women involved, whether they are married or single, the age at which they abort their children, trends in urban and rural areas and provincial differences in the rate of abortion. All of this information helps those who address this problem in terms of supporting and caring for women seeking abortion. Alternatives to abortions will be much harder to establish if we cannot give an accurate profile of those who seek it in the first place.

One of the reasons given by Statistics Canada for the cutting of the therapeutic abortion data is that the data collected does not reflect the true numbers of abortions performed in Canada. StatsCan has collected data on legal abortions and not on the thousands of illegal abortions taking place in free standing clinics, mainly in the Province of Quebec.

In other words, the number of illegal abortions has risen to the extent that information on abortions performed in hospitals no longer gives valid data with which to assess the problem. Surely the solution to this dilemma cannot be to stop gathering the data because it is not the statistics themselves which are