

Canada Post Corporation Act

during the time they are at work. We must improve the productivity of the Post Office so that the Post Office can be a viable Crown corporation. Without improvements in productivity, we will have to review this corporation and find other methods by which to deliver our mail.

Indeed, technology is moving ahead, and unless the Post Office improves its productivity, the Post Office will not be necessary. People will send their cheques and pay their bills by means of electronic transfer of funds. People will communicate—me to you, Sir—electronically. We will not need people to walk the streets, drive trucks and deliver mail by hand.

I have great hope for the corporation. I hope the corporation will get its act together and do things to improve service. I hope the corporation will be an active competitor with present courier services, and I hope the corporation's reputation in terms of delivery of mail will improve.

I have with me tonight an envelope from the Department of Insurance. It says, "Département des Assurances, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H2". I do not know why the postal code is on this envelope because this department does not use the Post Office. It uses a courier service, the insurance courier service. Indeed, everything going from the Department of Insurance to insurance agents across Canada where there are courier services does not go through the Post Office. It goes by courier. It does so because the Department of Insurance wants to get it there. The courier service is dependable. If ever there was an indictment of the way the Post Office Department has been handling mail, it is when other departments of government refuse to use its service.

I was disappointed with the minister at report stage when he did not accept two of my amendments and two amendments of my colleague, the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty). I presented the minister an amendment with respect to the Auditor General. We are paying the Auditor General anyway; why should we pay two private auditing firms—not one but two—to audit this corporation? That is completely beyond me. I would have thought the Postmaster General would try to make the corporation more efficient and to cut its costs by using the present government service, but he did not.

Even more importantly, I would have thought the Postmaster General would look at the first amendment I proposed, which deals particularly with invoices or bills from public utilities. I want to read into the record of this debate a letter I received on February 25 last from A. E. Bradley, Chairman of the Mississauga hydroelectric power commission. Part of the letter reads as follows:

We have, in the past when there has been postal interruptions, utilized private couriers to deliver our mails. This work has been done not only efficiently but economically compared to current postal rates. As a utility, therefore, we would like to have the flexibility of delivering our bills through private couriers.

What are bills but invoices? The amendment which was before this House deliberately said that invoices are not letters. The Postmaster General said that invoices are letters. I am going to suggest to my constituent that invoices are not letters, and let the Postmaster General take it to court. Nothing in the

bill says invoices are letters. Mr. Bradley says he can deliver his hydro bills cheaper through private courier. He suggests there should be some discount for utility bills going through the mail.

● (2100)

It is a question of competition, a question of whether it can be done better. The other night my colleague, the hon. member for Brampton-Georgetown (Mr. McDermid), suggested that perhaps the boy scouts should be able to deliver flyers, and my colleague, the hon. member for Erie (Mr. Fretz), made the suggestion that perhaps disabled people might deliver utility bills. I suggest these people should be allowed to deliver that kind of mail, and the Postmaster General should have allowed that amendment, but he did not.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blenkarn: I am disturbed about that, as are my colleagues and so is anyone who receives gas bills, hydro bills and other bills. They are not letters. Whoever thought a bill was a letter? When my wife gets a bill, she does not want to open it, she leaves it for me. Bills are not treated as letters. She treats them as bills. You can smell the things. They are not letters, they are bills, and I say to the Postmaster General that they should be completely exempt in the act. The act does not say they are letters; it does not say anything about invoices. I say to the people who send invoices in that way that they might well challenge this act in the courts. I suggest that very few people, I am sure none on this side of the House and certainly none in this party, would want to say to their wives, "I have a letter for you, dear". You know what would happen. She would say, "that's a bill, it's not a letter". I tell you, sir, our amendment would clarify the situation. The Postmaster General has not clarified it. I say to utility companies: deliver them because they are not letters.

Now let me come to our major argument with this bill in connection with the corporation itself. We rushed this bill through committee and we were hoping to make further amendments at the report stage. One thing that we as a caucus think should happen with the corporation is that, like other corporations and businesses; like the banks, for example, this corporation should be subject to a sunset law provision. It should be required to come back to Parliament every five years or ten years—we suggest five years—to justify its existence, its *raison d'être*. It has to be able to show that it is fulfilling its mandate, doing what the Postmaster General said it should do and doing what our constituents say it should do. It should justify its monopoly. Perhaps it should have its monopoly extended, perhaps it should have it contracted, but it should come back before the House periodically as do other Crown corporations to justify why it is there. Do we need this service today that we needed five years ago or ten years ago? Do we in justice need the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation the way we needed it 25 years ago? Do we really need the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation the way we needed it 35 or 40 years, and should its mandate be changed or should it stay the same and be allowed to grow and grow?