

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

This measure will simply give Canada Post employees a say in their jobs and how the corporation is run. If, as members opposite are claiming, the government did have the privatization of Canada Post in mind, what is wrong with letting Canadians become shareholders in the corporation and thus real owners of the corporation? This kind of system will give Canada Post shareholders the right to say what they think of management, as shareholders.

In any company, shareholders have the right to insist that management and the board of directors manage the company so as to provide services on a profitable basis and, as I see it, far more effectively than the corporation does at the present time, although there have been many improvements and it now operates at arm's length.

The Liberals are critical of the government because of this arm's length policy. It is a policy that we have been applying systematically. Politicians no longer interfere with Canada Post, and that is as it should be. That is how we managed to set up an efficient and viable system that is making a profit.

Today, I challenge members opposite to tell us why they are so afraid to see Canada Post develop a more modern approach. Is it because they realize that, in the event they get back into power, they will no longer be able to interfere with Canada Post? I think that is the question we should be asking, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker: There are no questions at this point in the debate. Resuming debate.

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, the 10 minutes have not expired.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No questions at this point in the debate. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is well aware of the Standing Orders. The Chair cannot entertain any questions without the unanimous consent of the House.

[*English*]

Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have some no's.

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, there was a practice in this House for years—

An hon. member: Generations.

Mr. Milliken: —or generations. It goes back to the beginning of time that when a member was making a speech another member could get up and ask the member a question if the member making the speech permitted it.

I realize that we have these time rules. The practice has developed in the last few years that because of the question and comment period that is allowed after 20 minute speeches, it is rare for a member to be interrupted.

Members who have been in this House for some years know the practice. Back in the days when the time limit was 40 minutes it was very common for members to stand up and say to a member who was speaking: "Might I ask the hon. member a question? Will the hon. member permit a question?" That was the way it was put. If the member permitted a question, then a question was asked and answered during the 40 minutes.

All I was asking is that since the hon. member had not used his 10 minutes, would he permit a question during his 10-minute speech? He is about to finish. His time is still running. Will he permit a question?

If he will not, that is fine. However, it seems to me that it is not a question of unanimous consent, but whether the hon. member will permit a question in his speech.

Mr. Clark (Brandon—Souris): Madam Speaker, I was going to make the observation to you, as indeed you are well aware, that the rules have changed since the time of the practice to which the hon. member has referred. Consequently, what he is asking of the individual now is not appropriate.

Mr. Edwards: Madam Speaker, I think the member for Kingston and the Islands is something of a scholar of the standing orders—

An hon. member: He is a new member.

Mr. Edwards: —in spite of being a new member. He has been accused of being the reincarnation of Mackenzie King who was something of a master of House rules. I think he will find, if he examines Standing Order 74, that it is very clear that Your Honour was absolutely right. A question and comment period is not available during 10-minute speeches.