

Supply

Mr. Tobin: Rural postal service?

Mr. Holtmann: I am sure you will have rural postal service.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Resuming debate.

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Madam Speaker, it is rather interesting to listen to the chairman of the committee. This morning, beginning at nine o'clock, he chaired a committee that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) said on Friday really holds in its hands the future of postal service in Canada. Urban and rural Canadians are concerned about the Post Office and are wondering if they will be able to get mail any longer.

Canada Post has gone with total mechanization, automatic postal machines and automatic post office boxes. I suppose that Canadians actually believe that there will no longer be human beings handling the mail. We have seen the "super-duper mailbox" or the "super-blooper" mailbox, or "super-flop" mailbox, as we call it.

The Conservative Government has awarded more money this year and next year for new capital expenditures to that great Crown corporation of Canada Post than ever before in its history. The Government is providing for new capital expenditure for machines, but there is no expenditure for people. I suppose that is the source of funds to purchase the 30 new Chryslers at headquarters the other day. I suppose that is the source of money to purchase the 43 cars for the executives at the headquarters of Canada Post. The money is certainly not to hire the letter carriers and make sure that the mail is delivered door to door. It certainly is not to pay the salary of the postmasters or postmistresses in rural Canada, some of whom work half time, quarter time or even less.

Mr. Forrestall: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hesitate to interfere with the flying rhetoric, but the Hon. Member's point with respect to the purchase of cars is a very serious charge. I have taken it upon myself to check into it. I know the Hon. Member would not want to mislead the House, so I would remind him that it is in fact an erroneous piece of information.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Chair believes that is debate rather than a point of order. Now that the Parliamentary Secretary has put this on the record, he may want to discuss it further later today.

Mr. Baker: You are absolutely right, Madam Speaker. There is a longstanding rule in the Chamber that one does not question a Member's accuracy on a particular point, whether it is true or false.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker: In order to correct the record, let me say that I assume that General Motors made quite a gift to Canada Post recently.

Mr. Forrestall: I thought it was Chrysler Corporation. You better get it straight.

Mr. McKenzie: This afternoon it will be Ford.

Mr. Baker: The fact of the matter is that when the Conservative Government was elected two years ago it said that Canada Post would break even and become self-sufficient. Under this glorious Government, Canada Post is shutting down rural Post Offices. In the last six months, 48 Post Offices bit the dust, mostly in western Canada and, of course, in Conservative ridings. There were seven Post Offices in Atlantic Canada, two of which closed in Newfoundland recently.

Let me give an example of what Canada Post does. Its officials went door to door and told residents of a place called Country Road in Newfoundland, about four miles from Bay Roberts, that their post office will be closed but they will have a free post office box for a year, four miles away in Bay Roberts. Of course, the people assumed that they had to accept this decision. This is gradually happening across the country.

I might say that neither post office was closed in my riding, nor was one closed or slated to be closed in the riding of the Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin). However, post offices are being closed on the east coast, south coast and north coast of Newfoundland.

There are 5,221 post offices in rural Canada, 3,521 of which are up for privatization in the future. According to the postal plan, 1,700 will disappear either through amalgamation or replacement with a combination of franchising and super-mailboxes. You can see, Madam Speaker, what a drastic change has been made in Canada Post recently with this postal plan which was approved by the Conservative Cabinet in October and announced in the House in November.

• (1240)

The Minister responsible for Canada Post and the Prime Minister keep saying, well, you know, the House of Commons Committee will have a look at the postal plan. But, Madam Speaker, they approved the postal plan in Cabinet in October of this past year. They were the ones who said that for all time in Canada there will be no more door-to-door mail delivery. Suppose a person decides to build a house in a subdivision in Ottawa or Toronto or some urban area. I do not know very much about that because I am from rural Newfoundland. But imagine, Madam Speaker, spending \$100,000 or \$150,000 on a home only to discover that for all time there will never be door-to-door mail delivery to your home, although around the corner is another street which has door-to-door mail delivery? What would that do to the value of the House if one wanted to sell it? Obviously, to be able to say you have door-to-door mail delivery is better than saying one has to go down to the corner a block away to a box to pick up one's mail. It is obvious that the property would be of greater value if there was door to door mail delivery.