

Canada Post Corporation Act

Mr. McDermid: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have just one very short question to put to the minister, if he will accept it. The minister has not answered the question I put to him earlier. What about the special interest groups, such as boy scouts, girl guides or air cadets, who deliver messages for, let us say, a ratepayers' group in a certain area or a politician who is calling a meeting in his constituency; what happens to those individuals who in this way can earn a little extra dough so they can carry on their good works in the community? Are they automatically outlawed by this bill, or will they be allowed to carry on as they have in the past?

Mr. Ouellet: I am glad the hon. member is asking this question because it was put to me in committee where I said quite categorically that this will no longer be permitted. If we want to help charitable organizations, there are many ways of doing so, and it should not be done by subsidizing such groups to the detriment of the Post Office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair has recognized a large number of questions and points of order. I would prefer now to recognize the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) because this is not committee of the whole.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, one of the difficulties the minister is encountering is that monopoly and efficiency are not coterminous. Giving the corporation a monopoly will not guarantee good service. As a matter of fact, when I wrote the minister on this point he wrote back saying that a monopoly has provided an assured source of basic revenue which, in turn, achieves economies of a scale that permits affordable rates. It provides a source of basic revenue, but does it provide basic service as required by the people? That is the question which I think thousands, and perhaps millions, of Canadians would like answered. Will they get the Post Office service they deserve and want through this type of monopoly? In his letter, the minister went on to say that it follows, therefore, that without the letter monopoly, higher rates, higher subsidies, lower quality of service, or all of these in some combination, would result. What I fear is that when there is a monopoly, unless there is a definite chain of command and some definite changes made in the structure of the Post Office, we will not get better service than we have today. Simply to change the name and retain the same personnel will not provide better service to the people of Canada.

Today, one of the major difficulties is that the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet), or the head of the Post Office in the civil service, cannot put his finger on the man or woman who is causing the delay. Consequently, they have gradually taken the authority away from regional post offices, until today almost everything is referred to Ottawa. Sometimes it takes months to get an answer.

One person in charge of a regional Post Office told me he had a very inefficient employee whom he wanted to fire, and he should have done so if that employee had done what he had which was alleged. However, he could not fire him because he had to ask permission of Ottawa. The answer came from Ottawa, probably by mail, three months later giving him

permission to fire the man. Of course, by that time everybody had forgotten what the man had done. You cannot run a business that way. To simply give a monopoly to a group and to say to them, "You do not have to meet certain standards" is to ask for trouble because if this fails, the people of Canada will certainly not be very happy. They are not happy now with the Post Office service.

I want to make one or two other points which I think should be made. A member of the NDP, the hon. member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke (Mr. Parker), decried the fact that we want to discuss these matters. I tell him that we want to discuss them because our constituents want us to discuss them. People are concerned about the inefficiencies in our Post Office and they want some assurance that these are going to be eradicated. I want assurance that that will be done.

For instance, people who are on workers' compensation—surely members of the NDP will understand this—deserve to receive their cheques on time, and they too have obligations to meet. I checked with the Alberta Compensation Board because several pensioners were not receiving their cheques, and their grocers, their butchers and their milkmen were getting angry. They do not have extra revenue; they do not have bank accounts. They are on partial or total disability pensions. They require their cheques to meet their obligations.

● (2100)

Recently the compensation board indicated that on the fifteenth of every month in the province of Alberta—and I think this is so in other provinces—they mail out cheques. If the fifteenth happens to be a Saturday or Sunday, the cheques are mailed out on the thirteenth or fourteenth.

Mr. Parker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) has referred twice to my speech. I think I am entitled to a point of order to rectify the situation. We are supposed to be dealing with an amendment with respect to definition. At the time of my comments I stated we were speaking about the definition of "mail". Also the minister stated in the House that it was a unanimous decision of committee to include this wording. I wish the member would stay on the amendment.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member would not make the same speech twice. This is not a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke (Mr. Parker) raised a point of order concerning relevance to the amendment before us. I listened to the hon. member's point of order, and I invite the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) to note that the item before us is the definition of a letter.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, surely I must have an opportunity to make some illustrations so the hon. member of the NDP will understand. There is no sense in raising points of order; he talked about these matters himself.