

Supply

The Member asked how many post offices I would like to have closed. I suppose the former Government would have closed none and had the taxpayers of Canada pay for them all. The attitude of that regime was "who cares?". However, I believe that we must find areas in which we can efficiently and fairly bring the service into reality. It made sense to abandon the railway when no one used it anymore. However, in the meantime it did not cost the Government millions of dollars to keep it open, so-called when it was not very efficient. There are alternate methods of transportation. The roadbed was used and that is working in some areas.

With regard to the supermailboxes, a great deal of concern was expressed by members of the committee. The Member for Gander—Twillingate has had a green box at the end of his road for 30 years and he never complained to us about it. I do not know whether he has ever written a letter. He may want to comment on that. I bet that a superbox would be better than the old ones in certain areas if the repairs which we have asked for are done.

Mr. Keeper: Madam Speaker, my question with regard to the superbox had to do with the substitution of superboxes for lot line service, for the delivery of mail to homes in rural areas. That is in the plan which the committee is now considering. The Hon. Member has said that he wants to have those boxes fixed up. Is he endorsing the use of those boxes as a substitute for home delivery in rural areas?

Mr. Holtmann: Madam Speaker, there is not a lot of home delivery in rural areas. I do not know where the Member toured. However, there are green postal boxes falling over on a lot of little corners in rural Canada. They have been there for 30 years. I suggest that the supermailbox is at least superior to that. That was a question asked by many members of the committee. We discussed at length the fact that the supermailbox should be repaired in order that it could replace and function better than the green mailboxes. Otherwise, there would be no point in installing them. We have been assured that the repairs will be carried out to make them secure. Time will tell whether that will be done satisfactorily. That concern was certainly raised. I have no doubt that the committee will address that issue in its report to the House, but I cannot state that that will be the case.

Mr. Fretz: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Member for Selkirk—Interlake (Mr. Holtmann) for his wonderful address. He drew on his vast experience as a committee chairman and shared his information with us. He did an excellent job. I appreciate his tremendous insight into the problems which Canada Post is experiencing. I had the privilege of sitting in the committee for a couple of hours this morning and observing the fine job he did of chairing the committee.

I would like to ask a question of the Hon. Member. As he knows, the NDP voted with the Liberals and Conservatives to create a Crown corporation called Canada Post. At that time the Government was seeking self-sufficiency for Canada Post

in five years. Given the Hon. Member's vast experience in this area, will the Hon. Member tell us why the NDP has changed its mind?

• (1230)

Mr. Holtmann: Madam Speaker, I cannot answer that question directly in terms of what the Party does with its posturing to become more popular in Canada. They try many things, and I suppose that they hoodwink the Canadian public from time to time. I urge the committee member from the New Democratic Party to use the committee to effect change for the Crown corporation. I believe that this is a very viable solution under the new rules and mandate we have been given. There are problems with Crown corporations but we have a mechanism to deal with them. I believe the way in which we have been proceeding has been most effective and will continue to be so, even as we go on to other realms with our witnesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin). There is one minute left.

Mr. Tobin: Madam Speaker, I simply want to say to the Hon. Member who just spoke that he indeed has been fired up and eloquent today. He has given a very rousing, effective defence of an almost impossible Government posture. I do not agree with what he said, but I at least admire his spleen in trying to defend the Government.

The Member is chairman of the committee that is considering this whole matter and making recommendations to the Government. Notwithstanding all that he said today, can he give me as a Member of Parliament representing rural Newfoundland in this country an assurance that people in rural Newfoundland will continue to have rural postal service? When he asks rhetorically, "who cares", I tell him that I care. I tell him that rural Canadians who have minimal Government service care, and we want his assurance as chairman that indeed rural service as we now have it will be continued, as recommended by him and his committee. Will he give us that assurance?

Mr. Holtmann: Madam Speaker, I welcome the question by the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin). I wish he had attended our committee hearings.

Mr. Tobin: I am not a member of the committee.

Mr. Holtmann: I indicated before that it did not matter if you were a member of the committee. The Member raises a very valid point that is not only expressed by him, but by other Members from all Parties. He asks if rural Canadians will still get postal service. I can assure him that I do not think any of us in the House would not want them to have postal service.

Mr. Tobin: Will we?

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