

offer a reasonable postal rate. It is desirable that services be paid for as long as there are no abuses. It is possible to find some solutions to this problem so that the minister might save as much public money as possible. The public can then expect better services, because if it is possible to reduce expenses, better services can be provided even though the Post Office Department should not be considered a national bank or the Bank of Canada.

Before closing I would like to say how much I admire the minister because he does his work well. I obtained answers to all my requests, and was given all kinds of assurances. He told me the truth and I admire him for it. He is fair and we can trust his word. He is not to blame for mistakes or nonsense which originate in other quarters. I ask him once again, with all due respect to him and the government, to do us justice, because it is not easy to understand some of the things that are happening.

[English]

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, I gather that the House wishes to conclude the debate shortly with the remarks of the soon-to-be Postmaster General, so I shall be very brief. I should like to make a suggestion to the hon. gentleman. He need not reply tonight but perhaps he and his officials would consider it and an answer could be given when the matter comes before the committee.

The one specific complaint that I have about this legislation is that it would add to the financial burden of charitable organizations which raise much of their money by solicitation through the mail. While the amount involved may be small, some of the views that have been expressed to me, and no doubt to other members, indicate that for these organizations it is a pretty serious problem. I suppose an increase of even 10 per cent in the cost of raising money could put a tremendous strain on them. While the third-class mail rate normally applies in such cases, perhaps the time has come to adopt a more flexible position toward these charitable organizations because of the important work they do.

Perhaps the minister or his officials could think of some other designation for charitable organizations which raise money through solicitation by mail. I offer this as a suggestion to the minister, and perhaps after consulting his officials he will be able to give a considered reply when the matter comes before the committee.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose everything and anything the minister may suggest or propose in the form of a bill to increase first-class mail rates. It has already been said that first-class mail breaks even or makes money. Junk mail has also been mentioned. I suggest to the minister that if he is really concerned about reducing the deficits in the Post Office Department there are a couple of areas he should consider. I do not know if they have been mentioned already because I have not heard all the speeches in this debate.

• (9:50 p.m.)

The minister might consider the \$1.5 million used to subsidize *Time* and *Reader's Digest*, those great "Canadi-

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an" publications with all their Canadian content. He might consider raising their mailing rates to reduce the deficit of the Post Office Department. As a good Canadian, as one who is concerned about the welfare and good order of the postal service in Canada and who is primarily concerned about reducing the deficits of the Post Office Department or reducing the cost to the public, the minister should pick up this \$1.5 million quickly because he can do that without antagonizing the people of Canada or the members of the House.

There is a second item that the minister might consider. Let him look at the \$3 million or \$3.5 million cost to the postal department of Canada occasioned by the imbalance in mailing services as between Canada and the United States. This mail is carried under an international agreement many years old. The volume of United States mail crossing into Canada, in terms of number of pieces of mail, is much greater than Canadian mail handled by the United States postal department. This has resulted in an imbalance or a net cost to the Canadian Post Office Department of \$3.5 million a year. If the minister wants to find another \$3.5 million with which to reduce the deficit, he need only look at all the crap that is sent here from across the border.

An hon. Member: That's unparliamentary.

Mr. Benjamin: If he cannot negotiate better terms with the post office department of the United States to correct that imbalance, it is obvious and logical that the treasury of Canada should pick up the tab and not our first-class mail senders. I am wondering if the minister has considered that little piece of cake. We brought it to the attention of his predecessor but he pooh-poohed the idea.

If the minister is wondering why he has not been able to get the floor before ten o'clock, I will tell him. He has not listened to our suggestions. We might take another couple of nights and the minister still would not get the floor before ten o'clock. Unless he indicates to the members of the House and the people of Canada that he has considered the matter, he may not get the floor before ten o'clock in the next two or three weeks. That is not a threat, it is a promise. Has he looked into that situation yet? If so, what will he do about it? Here is a matter involving *Time* and *Reader's Digest* where \$1.5 million could be saved. On the imbalance in postal deliveries between Canada and the United States, another \$3.5 million could be saved. That is five million bucks, Mr. Speaker. It is five times C. D. Howe's expression. What is the minister prepared to do about these matters?

If the minister wants to get off the backs of the people, if he wants to cut net costs in the Post Office Department and for those who perform some kind of social service or function for their fellow citizens—here I am referring to the weekly newspaper and to charitable, social or paternal organizations such as the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) mentioned—he should not allow *Reader's Digest* to send their junk through the mail asking me to buy a book or a record every month. That is costing us money. If he stops it, he will not hear any argument from members of this House.