

Canada Post Corporation

former box back in the central post office because he had never requested the change to a group box. He was then told he would either take what he was given or his rates would be doubled. That is adding insult to injury. Again, his is not an isolated case. He has paid his money and then is told he has to take his chances when he thought he knew what he was getting in the first place. That is totally unjust, and surely the cost factor to the post office is not such that people should be treated in quite that way.

● (1740)

A member—I think it was the previous speaker from the Conservative Party—mentioned a number of issues relating to the ability of the post office to finance, especially during its current transitory phase, some of the improvements which many of us demand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. I am well aware, first, that we are coming to the end of the session; second, that it is the middle of the summer; and third, that it is private members' hour. Still and all, I do not think we ought to put aside completely the rule of relevance. Perhaps it is wise that on some occasions members should be reminded of it.

I want to assure the hon. member that, given the circumstances I just mentioned, I am not going to apply the rule very stringently. However, I do suggest that if he examines the motion he will see the words:

—the receipt of mail by persons living in towns who are not entitled to postal delivery at their residences.

I would also want to indicate to the hon. member that because I was rather busy with other matters I did not pay careful attention to the preceding speaker, the hon. member for York North (Mr. Gamble), but I will pay careful attention to the next hon. member to follow. For the sake of the rule of relevance I would ask the hon. member if he could try to address himself to the motion.

Mr. Kristiansen: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware that I talked about anything other than the problems of people in rural areas who receive their mail either through group boxes or post office boxes, and I have not dwelled at all on those who receive their mail by way of home delivery, which is quite different in some respects from what both the previous speakers spoke about. Perhaps I have been wandering in some areas, but I do not see a distinction at all between what I have been saying and the rule of relevance. However, I will bear it in mind so that I do not stray too much in the future.

In many of the responses which I have received from the post office corporation, and I am sure other members have as well, one of the major points raised regarding prospective improvements is that "we will continue to respond to changing community needs with mail delivery best suited to local conditions as the resources of the corporation permit". Because of the importance of having the corporation spend its money as wisely as possible, I think a number of us have been more than a little taken aback at recent plans, for instance, by the post office to spend some \$200,000 in advertising. We are talking of approximately a \$400 million deficit, which others have said

may grow to \$500 million, but nevertheless what is this \$200,000 to advertise? I think most people, at least in the area I represent, are quite aware of the limitations on service and they realize that it is going to take some time to improve. They do not need to be told that things are improving; if there is an improvement in service they will see it very quickly and I am sure some of them will even inform us. Some of them have already because they have been heartened by the little progress they have seen in the improvement of delivery which has taken place over the last few months.

There is another matter which touches upon the ability of the post office to finance some of the requested improvements, and it has relevance to a bill currently before the House. Last Friday I asked in the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates a question of a gentleman appearing before that committee in another capacity but who is a director of the Canada Post Corporation. It had to do with the implications of Bill C-124 and its effect on the post office corporation. Because it does affect the financial ability, as he saw it, of that corporation to provide some of the increased services people are demanding, including the hon. member who sponsored the motion before us, I do indeed think it is relevant to the matter at hand. The answer of Mr. Lang was as follows:

I think Bill Findlay from the letter carriers can probably supplement anything I am about to say. I have been working closely with all the unions in the Crown corporation and the Post Office before it became a Crown corporation, and since it became a Crown corporation I have been one of the labour directors on the Canada Post Corporation. So I do have some familiarity with the Post Office.

Let me say that throughout the transition to Crown corporation status, and since it has become a Crown corporation, all the unions have been working closely under the umbrella of the congress in meeting with the president of that Crown corporation and in looking at all areas of that Crown corporation's activities. I would even go so far as to having real input and making amendments to the long-range corporate strategy on service, financial self-sufficiency, and labour relations. The unions are having a real impact on that corporation in trying to turn it around.

Let me be quite frank with you. Since this bill has come down, it has not only thrown into question all the objectives of Canada Post Corporation, because the five-year plan which had been drawn up and the financial targets which are to be met are now all thrown into jeopardy, both on the receipt side and on the expenditure side—it is very, very doubtful whether the Crown corporation, if the government pursues its Bill C-124, particularly on the price increase side but also on the labour relations side, is going to be able to meet its financial commitments or the financial stringencies this government has placed on it. In other words, if it cannot meet them, what it is going to mean, in my opinion, as a director, is that the Crown corporation is going to have a larger deficit, and that is going to have to come out of general revenue.

I think that points out another danger in areas that we will be dealing with in the days immediately to come, which will put further roadblocks in the way of all those members who have been attempting for months, many for years, to get better service not only in the rural areas but also in urban areas, particularly in western Canada, who have been waiting for ungodly lengths of time for an extension of home delivery. Certainly they have some benefits of urban residents, but they do not have the benefit of a modernized postal service. We certainly hope that whatever is done in the future, if we are successful in assisting those who are trying to modernize the post office, we can bring about some of the improvements to