

*Supply—Post Office*

The other policy matter I wish to raise is in connection with rural mail delivery. I am going to mention only one phase of it, and though many other things could be said concerning rural mail delivery other hon. members have either already said them or are going to say them before this discussion is over.

One problem that is encountered in my province at least, and it is probably common throughout the prairie provinces, is the difficulty experienced by mail contractors who serve rural routes during the winter months when the roads are blocked with snow. The contracts that are entered into contain certain provisos to the effect that the roads must be kept open and in a condition which permits of travelling on them. After each snowstorm it is the duty of the local patrons to break a track so the mail carrier does not have to plow through snowdrifts.

That in itself does not solve the problem. I do not know whether the minister is aware of this, but if a mail carrier were to attempt to provide continuous service during the winter months, as most of the patrons expect, he is almost required to have what for lack of a better term I must describe as an amphibious method of transportation because the traditional methods of winter travel—that is by team and sleigh or by motor vehicle—are not feasible. The situation is that most of the roads today either have a gravel surface or are in such a condition that you will find one part of the road completely blocked with snowdrifts which will make it impossible to use a motor vehicle, whereas another part of the same road will be completely bare of snow which has been blown off by the winds, thus making it impossible to travel by sleigh.

If it is the policy of the department to make it possible for rural mail carriers to provide continuous service under all conditions during the winter months—and that certainly would be the ideal situation—it seems to me there is only one solution. That is, they will have to pay the rural mail delivery contractors enough money so they can maintain some sort of amphibious transportation in the nature of what we call in the west a bombardier, or what in some cases is called a snowmobile, but at any rate a vehicle that will travel on both bare ground and snow.

As I say, that would be the ideal situation. If it is not the intention of the department to provide sufficient remuneration for the rural mail carriers to secure that type of transportation, then I think the least that could be done at this time would be to notify rural mail patrons to this effect so they would know what are the responsibilities of the

contractors. I think that would be rather easy to do. All the Post Office Department would have to do would be to issue a leaflet each fall and have it delivered to every patron on a rural route, notifying him in summary fashion what are the provisions of the contract and what he can expect in terms of service from the mail carrier during the winter months.

Year after year complaints pour into the local postmaster or to the local member of parliament or to the director of transportation of mail service in the city of Winnipeg, and hundreds and hundreds of letters have to be written quoting from part of the regulations and pointing out that the mail contractor is limited as to what is expected of him under his contract. I am not suggesting that simply letting them know why the mail contractor cannot deliver mail under all conditions in the winter months would solve the problem, but if nothing else is going to be done at least that much should be done.

I would hope that with the substantial surplus the Post Office Department is showing for the current year perhaps the policy at this time will be to endeavour to provide continuous service under all conditions during the winter months. That would mean providing sufficient remuneration to these carriers to enable them to purchase and maintain some sort of amphibious vehicle which could travel equally well on snow or bare ground, and in that way they could deliver mail regularly to their patrons all the year round.

These are two matters upon which I would be pleased if the minister could make some comment when he takes the floor.

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Chairman, I hope the Postmaster General will not mind if with respect to the matter I would like to raise I discuss it with his parliamentary assistant, the hon. member for Shelburne-Yarmouth-Clare. The matter has to do with a bit of confusion that appears to exist regarding the correct name of a community in the constituency of my hon. friend. The community, if I may give it what I believe to be its correct name, is Wood's Harbour in Shelburne county, a community which is in fact three communities, Upper Wood's Harbour, Lower Wood's Harbour and Central Wood's Harbour. I am using the name as I find it on page 503 of the chief electoral officer's report for the 1953 election. I could tell my hon. friend how many votes he got at these points, but that is not relevant to the present discussion.

**Mr. Lapointe:** You might remind him.