

Supply—Post Office

papers which are taking a free ride, I would suggest to him that there are formulae which could be devised to meet this problem without necessarily jeopardizing the small town papers to which the minister has referred.

I should like to suggest that what the minister is doing is the very thing he says he does not want to do. Perhaps we in parliament are doing it. But by forcing these deficits upon the post office, which deficits are based on political considerations, we are forcing the post office to carry out economic and political decisions of this house. This is not something which should be forced upon a public utility. The post office as a public utility should give maximum service at cost and should not have perpetual deficits forced upon it merely to carry out political and economic decisions of this parliament. If we decide in our wisdom that we are going to subsidize periodicals—and I am not one of those who think we should—it should be by means of some above the table grants, so that they are out in the open, everyone knows what they are for, and the politicians have to justify them, not the civil service.

The criticisms we have been making are not criticisms of the officials. They only carry out policies, or lack of policies, in the circumstances. This is a criticism of the government, of the previous government, and I think it is a legitimate criticism of previous parliaments. However, we do not want to get into that area today, although I do not think the minister has completely answered all of the matters which we raised previously. As I say, we are very glad to have all this important statistical information. We will study it and come prepared to deal with it on another occasion.

There is one other thing I want to suggest to the minister, and I am not wanting to be critical of him today because he has not been in office too long. Last year when the postal estimates were before the house I made a fairly lengthy presentation on other aspects of the postal department quite aside from the rate structure or stamps. I raised the problems of the staff, their lack of bargaining facilities, the inadequacies of appeals against dismissals and of representation on such appeals, the spying that goes on, the inadequate rates being paid for the operation of sub-post offices which make it very difficult to get people to take on this work, and a whole series of problems of morale. As I say, I am not holding the minister responsible in any way. He has not been in the department very long and will not have had an opportunity to go into these matters.

[Mr. Scott.]

But I hope that when his estimates come up next year he will have had an opportunity by that time to get out across the country, as I know he has been doing, talk to some of these people and try to find out the morale problems which exist. I do not know what advice the minister has received in Ottawa but believe me there are morale problems and none of us wants to see such problems continue any longer than is necessary. I think it is important for the minister and incumbent upon him to get out across the country, get to know the people of the department and then come back to us next year either with accomplished projects or a policy that will deal with all of the issues we have raised in the last two sessions.

I do not think it is necessary to go into the operations of the department at great length today. From what the minister has said and from what he has accomplished to date I think we are satisfied that at last we have a businesslike mind that is going to focus itself upon the problems of this highly important department. We hope that by next year these studies will have been completed and appropriate action will have been taken so that we can really commend the minister on a year's work very well done.

Mr. Leboe: Mr. Chairman, I have only a very few remarks I wish to make. First of all, may I say we have every confidence in the new Postmaster General. We certainly appreciate very much the statement he has made today. I am inclined to agree with the hon. member for Danforth, however, in what he had to say about second class mail.

I have one particular problem which I should like the minister to investigate. When postmasters in small post offices reach the age of 65 they are in a very unenviable position on being retired, because of their age. We find the Department of Labour is encouraging the hiring of elderly people but yet we find postmasters being relieved of their positions because of their age. In my view there is nothing much easier in the way of work for an elderly person to perform than to look after a rural post office. It provides a little income with which he can make ends meet.

An individual who is retired may have stamps in his unemployment insurance book for the work he has been doing. Yet he is denied unemployment insurance benefits under the act because of the fact that he has to move from where he has been living to some other place in order to be available for work. There is a case of this kind at