

Adjournment Debate

having spoken to the clerk in the main office in the post office in Regina, find that their letters took five complete days to be delivered—more than five if one counts the whole of the period between the 21st and the 26th. I repeat, this was a letter marked “Special Delivery, “Express” on which a 40-cent stamp had been placed, and there is a direct airline service between the two centres at least once a day.

That is about the worst case I have come across, but it is not the only case. At least once or twice a week I personally write to the Postmaster General, and my constituency office writes to the postmaster's officials in Mississauga several times a week with respect to the kind of mail service the city of Mississauga receives. I want to remind the Postmaster General that Mississauga is larger than the city of Victoria, the capital of British Columbia; that it is larger than St. John's, the capital of Newfoundland; that it is larger than Regina, the capital city of Saskatchewan; larger by far than the city of Charlottetown, the capital of Prince Edward Island; and larger, indeed, than the City of Quebec which is the capital of the fair province of Quebec. Nevertheless, this city receives a postal service upon which the major industries within it cannot rely.

I have communicated to the Postmaster General evidence from the St. Lawrence Cement Company that it takes six days for special delivery of documentation to Mississauga from Chicago. Indeed, the St. Lawrence Cement Company has advised me that in no circumstances would it trust the Post Office of Canada; it would prefer to use the services of special bank courriers for the delivery of mail and important documentation.

Sometimes we in Canada cannot get too enthusiastic about the difficulties facing commercial organizations. After all, they only meet huge payrolls and pay enormous taxes to support such ineffective operations as I have been describing! There are people like Helen Friese who delivered evidence to me showing that it took mail from July 14 to September 10 to get from Port Credit to Toronto.

Mr. Alkenbrack: Shame.

Mr. Blenkarn: I have also received information from councillors of the city of Mississauga that even within the city mail sometimes takes six days to go from the sub-post office at Port Credit to the sub-post office at Malton. There are people who have been residents in my community since it was called the township of Toronto. They bring me evidence that mail in that part of the city of Mississauga still served by rural delivery usually takes seven days to come from Toronto.

This sort of thing goes on and on. Every time I write the Postmaster General about the kind of service Canadians expect, that people in a developed urban location like the city of Mississauga are entitled to receive from their government, I get wishy-washy, beautiful letters. Sometimes the department sends its officials to talk to my constitu-

ents. They give them the finest of soft soap. If they would spend half the effort on service that they spend on soft soaping and advertising their new direct service, their guaranteed delivery system, their wonderful six-letter codes, and give this community the kind of service it received with the pony express prior to the steam engine, we would be happy.

● (2210)

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I would briefly remind the hon. member that Toronto Post Office employees are handling about 5 million pieces of mail a day. I would also remind the hon. member that at this time of the year the employees of my department are handling about 10 million pieces of mail a day. Of course, we admit that errors are possible and I would like the hon. member to think that with a percentage of errors of only one per cent about 200,000 people would be entitled to complain for late mail.

I think that the hon. member has been slightly exaggerating in his speech and if he is in a position to give a few examples of errors I am convinced that with some goodwill he will find that the mailing services have been quite efficient in hundreds of cases. Perhaps he forgets that for one delayed letter 99 others are delivered on time. I think I should also emphasize that throughout the Post Office administration the improvement of our service depends to a large extent on factors independent from my department such as weather, road conditions and delayed planes or trains which are so many factors liable to influence the punctuality of mail deliveries.

There is also the fact that human nature is fallible and mistakes are bound to happen in the handling of mail. But I do not think that the hon. member is in a position to complain mainly because he is from Mississauga and that in reply to his letter I informed him on December 6 that precisely in Mississauga, we would build an ultra-modern post office to sort out the mail automatically, help improve considerably the mail handling and make that service much more efficient.

To my mind, the hon. member must think that everything works properly, under normal conditions. I urge him to make a personal inquiry. He gives me as an example a letter mailed from Regina which reached its destination too late. If the hon. member mails his letter before 11 a.m. in Regina, one can normally guarantee delivery in Mississauga on the next day; if the letter is mailed after 11 a.m., in the same city, it will not normally reach its destination the day after the next. In closing, I therefore say to the hon. member that, in most cases, we respect the time limits we set ourselves. When delays occur, unfortunately, we apologize for them. We strive earnestly to improve the service.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.13 p.m.