

Postal Service

may have written to them informing them that this motion was coming on today, since he only had 24 hours' notice. As we have already heard, mail dropped down the chute here today does not even get around these offices, let alone other government offices, within 24 hours, so perhaps it is understandable that no government member has spoken in support of the minister.

Mr. Cafik: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nowlan: When the notice went to the whip's office—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. The hon. member for Ontario is raising a point of order.

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I think it is rather important that I indicate that I do intend to speak. I rose in my place to be recognized, but there seems to be a deferential attitude taken to the opposition side of the house.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. That is not a point of order. The hon. member will have an opportunity to make a speech.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, I am glad we have finally stimulated some interest on the other side in helping the minister.

I am not going to repeat what has been said here today about the 100 per cent increase in box rentals, the reduced service and the elimination of rural post offices, something that has affected my riding. Let me just put the subject of this debate into a national perspective. The people in my hometown, which is a pretty well populated and developed area of Nova Scotia, are articulate and like to write letters. It has been brought to the minister's attention that it took five days for a first class business letter containing payment cheques to contractors in Halifax to be transmitted 60 miles from Wolfville to Halifax. It also took seven days to send a letter from Wolfville to Ottawa.

If I thought we were being discriminated against in this respect I would read this letter, but I also received a letter from a very good friend of mine who is a member of a leading law firm in Vancouver. He wrote me complaining that one letter, took seven days to go from Victoria to Vancouver, and this in the merry month of May. I have not yet had a chance to give the minister details of this particular incident, so perhaps there is an answer to it.

• (9:10 p.m.)

I do not rise this evening for the purpose of complaining about individual cases of deteriorating service and increasing costs, but really to bring a philosophical touch if possible to this debate. I suggest there is a sincere sense of sadness in Canada today at the slow service and increased cost of our postal facilities as well as a disappointment with the minister himself. One year and six months ago there was great expectation when this man rode out of Quebec on his white charger and injected great excitement and clarity into the Liberal sweepstake race. Canadians were entranced and many of them, I know, sympathized with him—perhaps not with their ballots—and with his stand. They took notice of the questions he said Canadians should answer. He carried on a most constructive leadership campaign and Canadians seeing him on T.V. saw all the best qualities of a good Irishman. After all, he came from a proven administration in the provincial field. Unfortunately, for a multitude of reasons, his performance in the post office and communications field has been to say the least—and I use an understatement—disappointing. The irony and paradox of the matter is that the Minister of Communications has failed to communicate with hon. members here, including the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik).

An hon. Member: That's Irish irony.

Mr. Nowlan: Yes, that is Irish irony, to say the least. He has failed to communicate with the public. Our people are accustomed to television and may become accustomed to "telstar" communications. They are prepared to accept a message when it is well put and convincing. But the minister did not communicate with the public. When he dropped the ax, raised postage rates and failed to communicate with his own workers, the trouble began.

The first real mistake the minister made was in not following suggestions made by hon. members on this side of the house that his bill go to committee to be discussed. In this way there could have been communication, a little education, a little change and, perhaps, some constructive criticism. One can only be amazed at the poor performance of the minister when one considers his background. In fact, when you come down to it, we are all disappointed with the performance of the government and with the man who rode in on the white charger to stimulate Canadians to the point where he won the