

Government Organization

I do not know whether the Postmaster General has answered that letter. I tried to check with the writer of the letter but was unable to do so. He belongs to a big publishing company and newspaper and was not available. Perhaps the Postmaster General should make a fresh start. Like many of us who have made mistakes, perhaps he should have a second chance, the opportunity to make a fresh start. Let him start all over again and correct his mistakes, provided he recognizes that he has made mistakes. I hope the minister is humble enough to recognize that he has.

Perhaps then the people who have to pay an additional 20 per cent in postal rates will forgive the minister. Perhaps the farmer who depends so much on agricultural papers for advice, education and tips will forgive him. The minister should be a little more humble in his discussions with the workers and should try to get out of the mess into which he got himself. I say with all sincerity that I hope the Postmaster General will be able to overcome these difficulties. He will have to be tough on himself and not regard himself as No. 1 in all knowledge. He will have to bring forward something far more appropriate than he has been able to do so far.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Chairman, I shall be brief. I have only a few questions to direct to the minister with regard to the closing down of some post offices.

In my district, some post offices have already been closed. They were small post offices which, according to the minister, were uneconomic. Some were in that category but not all of them. The minister should probably have ordered a more serious inquiry into the matter. He has decided otherwise; the government of which he is a member will bear the responsibility.

I want to ask him if he has ordered that those post offices be closed because there was a decrease in population in a parish or along a country road. I believe that is what happens in most cases. In fact, those post offices used to serve from 80 to 100 families, and in the villages there are now barely 13, 14 or 15 families. In such cases, I ask the minister if, instead of installing outside mail boxes such as can be found in a few localities in my district, he intends to have the mail delivered daily by the employee who covers the country roads, the one who has the contract. I do not see why this same person could not deliver the mail daily to the 12, 13 or 15 families of those small villages.

[**Mr. Rynard.**]

● (4:40 p.m.)

I have a feeling that the minister is going to order—as was the case in St. Félicien, in the village of Bellevue—that metal boxes be installed outside. This is disastrous in our regions and I have said so in the house before. As a matter of fact, these boxes are put up on the side of the road and every time the snowplow comes along it piles up snowbanks which are 10, 15 or 20 feet high where the people have to look for their mail boxes.

In those villages where it has been decided to close up post offices, it would be much cheaper and much easier to have the small quantity of mail delivered to families living there by means of a few changes in the contract held by the present mail carrier. Since the present mail contractors are now passing through those villages that would not create any problem for them. It might take them a little more time, but with a little extra money they could deliver the mail instead of leaving it in outside mail boxes in all kinds of weather conditions. I would suggest that the minister compel the present mail contractors to have the village residents provided with this service.

In my opinion, this is the best way to provide mail delivery service to those who are deprived of it at the present time, for the good reason that they used to have this service. In fact, I agree with the minister that these post offices were not showing a profit. However, with a little extra money, a small pay increase to those responsible for the rural mail delivery the minister could satisfy most of the residents of those small villages who are criticising the closing of their post offices. For instance, I think that if the local merchants were permitted to sell postage stamps, the daily mail delivery would be improved to the extent of satisfying everybody.

As I was saying to the minister, I am afraid these unpopular metal boxes are going to be installed outside.

That is the only thing I had to suggest to the minister with whom I exchanged correspondence several times with regard to the four post offices in my riding which were due to close on April 1st. I think that if he really wants to provide an adequate service the rural mail should be delivered at the door.

[*English*]

Mr. Kierans: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a few short remarks in response to some of the questions that have been raised.