

*Post Office Act*

7:30 p.m. Then, another 10 miles farther, the post office boxes are open till 9:30 p.m.

I made a telephone call again this morning; I was somewhat concerned because of the irregularity of the situation. In the light of these facts, Mr. Chairman, I come to the conclusion that the closing hours are related to the wishes or whims of certain employees.

In some post offices, the postmaster is responsible, but in others, we must get in touch with the Department of Public Works because the time during which we can have access to these boxes is decided by this department's officials. No matter who is in charge, standards should be established for such cases.

Moreover, as the rates for a letter or a parcel post are about the same, I imagine that for towns and villages of the same size, services should be comparable.

I hope that the minister will take into consideration the remarks of all hon. members. As far as the improvement of the few defective areas are concerned, I hope also that the minister will get in touch with the postmasters concerned because most of those employees work conscientiously. They work in the field and, in my opinion, they are really neglected. As a matter of fact, I am under the impression that they very seldom get a chance to speak. I suggest to the minister to consult those employees who would like nothing better than to put their intelligence at the service of the department by making suggestions that will benefit the Canadian postal service as a whole.

• (4:10 p.m.)

[English]

**Mr. Cowan:** Mr. Chairman, in taking this opportunity to comment on the resolution with regard to the proposed postal bill I wish to emphasize as vividly as I can that any remarks I make with regard to the post office are in no wise intended to reflect on the Postmaster General, whom I consider possibly the most conscientious member of the cabinet in the administration of his department. My reflections with regard to the resolution and the bill which will follow are directed primarily to the method by which legislation is placed before parliament, and I wish to comment on the manner in which so-called representative government never gives an opportunity to the people's representatives to do any governing.

When the broadcasting bill was introduced in the house I spoke at length on the manner

in which it was brought in, pointing out that members of parliament other than members of the cabinet were in no wise considered with regard to the bill or its contents, that neither the caucus, nor the party in power, nor individual members of parliament outside of the cabinet were asked anything about the proposed legislation, and pointed out that pieces of proposed legislation are never shown to them. I said at that time that when the post office bill or resolution was brought forward I intended to make the same comments, and I do so again, if possible with a little more vehemence. If the members of the House of Commons wish to consider me conceited, that is their privilege. It is a free country. But I still stand here, as I have said on more than one occasion when the post office estimates were up for consideration or a post office bill was being discussed, and say that I believe I know more about the Post Office Department than any other member of the house.

I had 25 years close association with the post office in a business way for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I am not exaggerating, because in the publication of newspapers with a circulation of one million a week, or 400,000 a day, you are in continuous contact with the Post Office Department. Yet as a private member of parliament, elected to this house from the riding of York-Humber, and as one who is conceited enough to say he does know something about the post office, I have never been asked a single, solitary question about it by any member of the cabinet, by anybody connected with the cabinet side of the so-called parliamentary system of government. But being on the right of Mr. Speaker I am immediately supposed to vote for anything which emanates from the cabinet mind because it is bound to be wholly right, wholly true, wholly correct.

I am not one who subscribes to the belief that the hand-picked members of the cabinet are right in every decision they make. How can you believe that every decision the cabinet makes in secret is right? When a general election comes around and a cabinet is unhorsed then you are supposed to criticize members of the former cabinet for what they thought were wholly right decisions when in office. I do not believe that any man is ever wholly right or wholly wrong, but I do believe that the representatives of the people should be given an opportunity to represent the people who elected them and present their views on the matters of the day that may be brought before the house.