

Post Office Act

• (3:40 p.m.)

Mr. Aiken: What happens if they do not buy stamps?

Mr. Kierans: They do not use the post office.

Mr. Aiken: Certainly they use the post office to drop letters into the mail box.

Mr. Kierans: The box will stay there.

Mr. Aiken: I do not accept that argument. What I am trying to say, in a reasonable way, is that many of the summer post offices are used for mailing and receiving letters. People do not necessarily buy their stamps because sometimes they bring them with them. It is unfair to judge the use of a post office by the number of stamps bought and the number of money orders made. The minister gave his answer and I will not pursue this any further, but I want to point out to him that in several of the cases brought to my attention, in which there has been a reversal of the policy and a post office was closed, it has been found, on looking into the matter further, that in fact the post office had been used, but that this did not show up in the sale of stamps.

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Chairman, I should like to make a few more comments. I appreciate the Postmaster General's conjecture that the *Journal* would probably raise its rates by only \$5, and I recognize this is a possibility. I also want to point out that the service is provided in many isolated areas in my constituency by aeroplane, which comes in every two weeks or once a month. I can imagine what it would be like to get one month's issue of the *Journal*, and the price which the *Journal* has quoted me is \$35 a year, rather than \$20. People in the north would then be paying more for old papers than people living in large urban areas would pay for daily newspapers.

Mr. McIntosh: I asked the minister a question to which I did not receive an answer. My inquiry was as to the criteria upon which the minister or his departmental officials determine that a post office has outlived its usefulness, and the purpose for which it was originally established.

Mr. Kierans: By the use that the local patrons make of that particular unit.

Mr. McIntosh: I wonder if the minister has also taken into consideration, in his economic argument or that of his officials, the amount of revenue derived from the taxation of the

people employed in ranching and farming in those areas, or does he only consider the direct revenue derived from the post office? If this is so, how do we serve the people on the ranches and the farms in the remote rural areas in western Canada? I say again that this is a penny wise and pound foolish policy which will bring disaster to the Canadian people.

Mr. Skoberg: I will deal specifically with clause 1 concerning the filling of vacancies in the post offices and the letting of contracts. Everyone realizes that the public generally believes that the Post Office Department is filled with people who have obtained their positions through political patronage. I believe that recently there may have been some change in that practice and I should like to know whether or not the Postmaster General would give us his views regarding some of the changes in the policies of his department.

Mr. Kierans: This is all under review, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Skoberg: Am I correct in understanding from the minister's remark that there is still political patronage in the Post Office Department?

An hon. Member: You know better than that.

Mr. Korchinski: I will be very brief, Mr. Chairman. Now that the minister indicated that consideration will be given with regard to the setting up of post offices, and as to the amount of revenue which they may bring in, and now that he has the former postmaster general right beside him, I wonder if he could look over some of the records to see how many post offices have been established in areas where the revenue is small, as compared with the number that have much larger revenues. What was the consideration in setting up the former. I wish he would do that in view of the fact that he said he would scrutinize the costs very closely. I can refer him to several cases with which I am familiar, which have come up last year, and regarding which I had considerable correspondence with the former postmaster general and officials of other departments. I asked for the reason for constructing post offices in areas which bring small revenue and where expenses are greater.

There does not seem to be any fairness in the administration. Without opening a whole can of worms I should like to point out to the