

Supply—Post Office

carriers in the province of Quebec and correct this gap if it really exists.

[Text]

Mr. Alkenbrack: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to take part in the discussion of the estimates of this venerable and historic department of government. I would remind hon. members that a post office is one of the first requirements of any organized society or any organized community in all organized countries. We are reminded when we read history that the first thing to be set up after law and order, are the facilities for the collection and delivery of the mail. Therefore I wish to congratulate the minister on bringing before the committee his first estimates for the respected department over which he presides. I also wish to congratulate his predecessor on his elevation to the sublime serenity of the other place. I am reminded of several services that were required in my riding and which the former postmaster general provided, as was his duty and the duty of any minister of the crown.

My remarks, Mr. Chairman, will consist of three or four references of a local character, more or less in the nature of complaints about the minister's department, and a reference to history. I have here a book, the *Canada Directory, 1851-1852*. This book came out of an attic in Napanee. It contains many interesting references, one of which relates to the Post Office Department of that day. In passing I might mention for the interest of hon. members that we had only some 730 post offices in Canada in 1851. I remind hon. members that Canada, of course, consisted of Canada east, or Lower Canada, and Canada west, or Upper Canada. This post office directory section of the book is most interesting. It contains the name of each post office in Canada, the county or township or seigniority in which it was situated, and the name of the postmaster. Several hon. members have viewed this book briefly and have seen family names in it of local interest, that still exist in modern communities. I note that the postmaster general of that day was Hon. James Morris.

The headquarters of the department were in Quebec city. This was in the days when the national capital of the two Canadas swung back and forth between Toronto, Montreal, Kingston and Quebec city. I note in passing, Mr. Chairman, that the head of the department received £1,000 a year. So much for history.

I have a complaint from the corporation of Bath, which is one of the oldest villages

in my riding. Bath is also prominent in early history of Upper Canada. It is the oldest incorporated village in Canada today. Reference is made to it in the postal guide 1851-52, in these words:

The village of Bath is situated on the shore of lake Ontario, in the township of Ernestown, county of Addington, C.W.—distant from Kingston, 18 miles—usual steamboat fare, 1s, 9d.—usual stage fare, 3s, 9d. Population about 550.

Bath within its boundaries is not much more populous today than it was then, it being one of the incorporated municipalities which seems to have been bypassed in the filling up of the country in the 19th century. However, last year the Conservative administration was requested by me to provide a post office for the villages of Odessa and Bath. In the winter of 1963 the one in Odessa was built and is long since finished and functioning. The one in Bath has recently been opened, having been built and completed by the present administration. Like all departments and regardless, it seems to me, of who heads the administration, we have become a bit niggardly in the purchase of land for our public buildings, especially in the case of the post offices. We now find at Bath that the land purchased for the post office is not of sufficient area to take care of the turning of these bus-type vehicles with a long wheelbase which draw mail. The backyard area is insufficient to allow for the turning of these vehicles, and I have received a complaint from the corporation of the village of Bath in this regard.

I should like to cite briefly one paragraph of a letter dated July 10 from the corporation of Bath:

Further to our letter on May 12, 1964 addressed to the engineering branch of the Canada post office, and your reply of May 26 under your file No. 724-2220, the new post office was occupied as of June 27, 1964, and it is found that the courtyard facilities are not adequate for the turning of vehicles which carry mail, despite your statement that a survey and complete study—

That seems to be a common term used by the administration, and I sometimes doubt whether these studies are actually made; one can very briefly study in thought and produce no resulting action—

—indicated that the site is satisfactory and affords adequate operational manoeuvrability.

The result of that study which was made by the department and the result of the good judgment of the drivers of the vehicles who go into the premises to pick up and deposit mail seem to be absolutely at variance one with the other. I went down there and made