

*Postal Service*

speaking in this debate and listening to other debates that have taken place in this house since the minister assumed this portfolio, that it is somewhat of an exercise in frustration.

One has the uneasy feeling that the Minister of Communications, as he is now known, does not really care about the postal service of this country. That is about the only way you can rationalize his behavior, his conduct, his reaction to the repeated criticisms, valid criticisms that have been made by all sides of the house regarding the way in which the postal service has deteriorated.

I was interested in an article which appeared the other day in the *Monetary Times* which referred to the minister's new department and his plans for it. The emphasis now is on communications, and I suspect the article was probably written by the minister's executive assistant, Mr. Richard Gwyn. At any event amongst numerous other assertions it said the minister "sees his department's role as that of a 'midwife'—helping in the birth of new projects and ideas, then turning them over to someone else to run." That may be so. Perhaps the minister is a midwife in launching the new satellite era, the new Department of Communications, but one also gets the uneasy feeling that he has been guilty of an illegal abortion on the postal service of this country.

It is about time that the minister and his colleagues in the government started to pay a little attention to what is being said in and outside this house, all across the country, regarding the very serious deterioration in the postal service. And, Mr. Speaker, I understand it is being said elsewhere. I am sure the backbenchers in the Liberal party are equally disturbed about the serious decline in postal services, and I am sure they must have made this known to the minister in caucus.

It seems to me that the job, perhaps to the minister the mundane job, of delivering the country's mail, has been relegated by him to a second class position in his list of priorities. Canadians in many parts of the country, and many in my own city have to suffer by going 72 hours without mail deliveries. As the hon. member for Hillsborough so eloquently said, we now have a five-day delivery and a six cent postal rate. That the postal service has deteriorated to a point where it is a question of national concern and alarm is, in my view, an undisputed fact.

• (8:20 p.m.)

We find ourselves in the rather anomalous position in this country today where the cost of the postal services is increasing and the postal services themselves are declining. It is no wonder, then, that there are those who would seriously call for the minister's resignation. I should like to quote briefly from a recent issue of the *Financial Post*, the edition of May 3:

The taxpaying public would rather get its money's worth from existing postal services than pay for its rampant spread into new and fancy fields of endeavour.

I go on to quote again from this same article. I am quoting now from statements allegedly attributed to the Postmaster General:

There is one clear message: we have until 1975 to put our house in order. That is when we can expect the big breakthrough in many technical advances now on the drawing boards.

I say that the country cannot wait until 1975 for the minister to put the house in order. The country wants the postal services put in order right now. We cannot afford to wait. The mails are late enough as it is, as my colleague has interjected. Last year, before the present minister became so involved in satellites and holographs, I would have been very much opposed to the idea of making the Post Office Department a Crown corporation. Now, however, I am convinced, especially since the passage of Bill C-173, the government reorganization bill, that this is about the only way we can have an efficient postal service restored in this country. I say "restored" because in my view we did have a good postal service in Canada before this minister and the government started tinkering around with it.

What is alarming to me today as a member of parliament, as I am sure it is to many members of parliament, is the fact that the postal employees, the 48,000 Canadians for whom the minister is responsible in this house, are demoralized. They are demoralized to the point that they are unsure of their future. Paradoxically, the new Minister of Communications does not seem to be able to communicate effectively with the people in the Post Office Department who are responsible for maintaining the postal service in this country. We saw evidence of that last February during the dispute with the letter carriers. We found ourselves watching the spectacle of the Postmaster General having to communicate with his employees in the Post Office Department by press release.