

Postal Service Policies

Health and Welfare may yet have to come up with a profit and loss statement.

In 1949 Newfoundlanders voted by a very narrow margin to enter Confederation. I said before, and I say again, that we benefited considerably from that union. I know we have old age pensions, family allowances and welfare benefits which have been of great assistance to our people. However, not all Newfoundlanders require this financial assistance. Recently we have heard much talk about separation of Quebec and separation of the western provinces. I wonder if many Newfoundlanders ever regret their vote in 1949. Since this government came to power two years ago Newfoundlanders have been given just cause to regret their decision in 1949. I can think of two things right off the top of my head. We have lost our rail passenger service, something we managed to keep going for 70 or 80 years despite our difficulties in the thirties. Now we are losing many of our post offices. It makes one wonder what will be next.

• (3:30 p.m.)

Newfoundlanders are noted for giving rather colourful answers when asked honest and sincere questions. I will give the House just a few samples. When the minister last appeared before the committee, one of my colleagues said he was so sugary you could get diabetes just from listening to him. Here are some of the comments about him from some of my constituents: "He's so mean he'd offer to take a mail carrier for a long walk on his day off," "He'd take a dead fly from a blind spider," and this is the one that really got me, "If I was drowning he would throw me both ends of a rope." And, Mr. Speaker, they do not even know him. I wonder if they know just how accurate their assessments are.

Mr. Pepin: This is taken from a book on Japanese humour.

Mr. Peddle: The hon. gentleman should be familiar with a book on Japanese humour. There are many other points which I might have talked about had there been more time, but I recognize that other hon. members wish to speak in the debate. I might have mentioned the fact that despite all the minister's proposed reforms, despite the raise in postal rates and the changes in classification of many non-profit periodicals, the postal service has not improved. In fact, it has deteriorated considerably and has become highly irregular and irrational. I might have mentioned the fact that the rural route system which has

[Mr. Peddle.]

replaced so many of our small post offices is not too successful because the service provided by it is unsatisfactory to many people and because it is proving to be much more costly than the minister had initially intended.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Peddle: I will just be a few more moments.

Mr. Pepin: Tell another story.

Mr. Peddle: The minister wants to be amused. There are too many jokes around here, Mr. Speaker. The elimination of the rural post offices is proving to be much more expensive than the minister initially intended. I might have mentioned the unwholesome and unacceptable state of what we call labour-management, or in this case labour-government relations that has arisen almost since the day the minister entered office, and I have not mentioned the apparent failure of the government's latest decision to place such delicate negotiations in the heavy hands of the inexperienced members of Treasury Board. Talk about bulls in a china shop! There are many things I might have mentioned had there been more time. But in conclusion I would simply say that Canadians have benefited, I suppose for 100 years, from the royal mail. We no longer have the royal mail: we have what is rapidly becoming a royal mess.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, the motion introduced by the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) has several interesting points on the operation of the Post Office and Communications Department.

I shall limit myself to one point in the motion, namely the one dealing with the deterioration of services and the closing down of small post offices, such as those my learned colleague has just referred to.

I cannot accept the allegations of the mover to the effect that the closing down of small post offices has helped deteriorate the Canadian postal service. This is far from the truth,