

*Supply—Post Office*

which to compare their own experience with that of the situation in Canada generally. I think it is interesting that just in the last few days there has become available a government publication entitled "Statistics of Criminal and Other Offences". This shows that convictions for burglary, housebreaking and shopbreaking were 6,634 in 1953 and 7,568 in 1954. That is an increase of 14 per cent in 1954 over 1953, which is the last period for which figures are available. We know that in that same calendar year with regard to the post office the increase was approximately 70 per cent in offences. Admittedly I am comparing convictions in the one case with offences in the other. In most of these cases, however, one knows that the rate of offence and the rate of conviction remains about in ratio.

I suggest that this is a disturbing set of statistics to bring before the house. When the minister was before the committee he promised us that he would investigate the possibility of centralizing all investigation of post office thefts and burglaries under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and that he would report to the house at this time on this matter. I hope he has made a serious study of this matter and that he can comment on it at this time.

There seems to be some indication—the department were loathe to give us details, and I must say that I understand their position—that burglar alarms are being installed in certain places across the country. That is certainly a step forward. From any evidence that I have been able to find, however, they are not being installed rapidly enough or extensively enough to deal with this situation. It would seem that the major post offices in the major cities of Canada should all be protected with a burglar alarm or some similar type of protection. After all, a net loss of \$100,000 in a year is quite sufficient to pay for a good many burglar alarms. In addition, the installation of these alarms would, in many cases, ward off potential robbers not only from the post offices in which they were installed but from others as well, because people would not know where they had been installed.

There is one further point I think should be made in connection with the post office, and when I have dealt with it I shall resume my seat for the time being. I refer to their insistence upon operating a banking system in competition with the private banks of this country. In the Woods and Gordon report which analysed their operation there was a definite recommendation that this banking system be discontinued. The post office flatly refused to consider the suggestion.

For my part I can see some justification for the department's stand that their post office banks may be needed in a limited number of small communities across the country which do not have regular banking service. But as was pointed out in the committee hearings, this same banking service in the post offices is being carried into every major city in Canada, and in many cases you have a post office bank on one corner and a commercial bank on the other. Very substantial savings to the taxpayers of Canada could be made if the operation of the post office saving bank were restricted to those very few areas where it could serve a useful purpose, and were eliminated in all those areas where it is in complete competition with the private banking system.

One word should be said, Mr. Chairman, by way of tribute to those who work in the post office, the 50,000 men and women across this country who serve that organization. We have and doubtless shall continue to have areas of strong disagreement on matters of policy. We shall no doubt disagree with the government on certain aspects of the post office operation. We shall have reservations about some of the things they may do. But from having met many of these people in various parts of Canada, I feel that under somewhat difficult and trying circumstances at times they are doing their best, that they have dedicated themselves to a life of service to the public of Canada and to making our post office as effective an operation as they can make it within the sometimes hampering restrictions imposed by government policy.

**Mr. Herridge:** I have always believed, Mr. Chairman, in the words of that old hymn, "Count your blessings one by one". When I am counting them I always include the Post Office Department and the parliamentary assistant. My nearest neighbour for 45 years is a relative of the parliamentary assistant. He lives about nine miles from me. He is the brother of the late Lindsay Gardner who was speaker of the legislature of Nova Scotia for many years. I like to listen to him talk about the parliamentary assistant, because that is what gave me the idea of counting my blessings. He has told me and my neighbours, all the people in my district from one end to the other, that the parliamentary assistant to the minister is the greatest blessing Nova Scotia has sent to Ottawa in a century.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I come back and say that any organization or department, no matter how efficient, is bound to make mistakes and is not, on that account, free of criticism. I make it a point when I am in my constituency to talk to the post-