

*Post Office Act**[Translation]*

Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf): Mr. Chairman, I shall take this opportunity to extend my sympathy to the Postmaster General (Mr. Côté), sponsor of this resolution. It is unfortunate to note that after less than two years, he has been forced to come begging to us again.

I remember that 21 months ago, the minister had accepted his appointment with the best intentions in the world and at the time, he had made his plans known to the whole country at a press conference. It is realized today that the minister is faced with the increased cost of living.

He has to administer a department which employs a great number of workers scattered throughout the country. Those workers must pay taxes like any other, in order to meet the requirements of financiers who are asking for a larger share year after year. Taxes and charges must be raised. Our businessmen, our industrialists, through force of circumstances, have become tax collectors have to hire additional personnel and this increases costs and requires an increase in the price of their products. The present minister faces all these increases: Increases in the cost of services, rents, wages, and so on.

In view of the problems brought about by the increase in the cost of living, the Minister of Finance last spring brought down a deficit budget. Nevertheless, the Postmaster General being an intelligent man, wants to run his department on a business basis. To meet the increases in rentals of departmental premises throughout the country, to meet the demands of contractors who supply the trucks, to meet the costs of transportation either by railroad or by air, it is obviously necessary to resort to a new increase in rates. I am not opposed to this plan, because I think that it is the department where the employees work the hardest. It is also a department which generally gives excellent service.

Personally, I had the opportunity to go to Vancouver last winter and I noted that a letter mailed on Monday afternoon had been delivered in Quebec Tuesday afternoon, 24 hours later. It is also known that from Ottawa to Quebec is a twelve-hour service.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. minister who uses modern means in modern times. We know that trains or trucks are still more advantageous for short distances, and that planes are better for long distances.

[Mr. Mather.]

There still are some rural areas which are served according to old methods because certain rules apply which date back to the days of wax candles when much of the transport was handled by ox-carts. Unfortunately, a few parishes in the riding of Portneuf, which I have the honour of representing, were served that way. Their service must be improved. Some time ago, I pointed out the situation to the hon. minister and I know he will do everything in his power to give satisfaction to the people concerned.

I take this opportunity to thank him for his co-operation. I wish also to tell the minister that the part of the resolution in which I am most interested is the last paragraph, and I quote:

—to provide further for certain changes in connection with the administration of the Act, more especially in relation to tenders and contracts.

It is interesting to note that the minister is looking for reform because the old system was really obsolete, and I could quote many examples to this effect. I have here the list of all the contractors of my region, and it is deceiving to note the numerous price differences between the various parishes for contracts providing for the same mileage and about the same number of subscribers.

This situation is caused by civil servants who work for the party. I have noticed in the past two years—I imagine that things were the same before I came here—that when the time comes to renew a contract awarded to a member of the party, the government never calls for tenders. When citizens who do not belong to a specific political party are involved, however, tenders are called. That is when people try to cut each other's throat, when unemployed persons, faced with the problems of survival and an insecure future, make unreasonably low bids and are unable to discharge adequately the responsibilities involved in the circumstances, I cannot but welcome the projects of the minister for improving those methods.

I should like to ask the minister to make a limited personal investigation in another area, more particularly in respect to closing times of rooms where post office boxes are located. In three post offices located within a few miles of one another, hours during which access may be had to post office boxes differ. In one post office, access to the boxes is prohibited after 6:30 p.m., since the facilities are locked. Ten miles farther, in another post office, the public has access to the boxes till