

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

mention a few instances to illustrate that the policy the Minister of Communications has initiated is in many cases completely unjust.

I am not referring to all low-income post offices. I can name at least seven low-income post offices in my constituency that have no justification for continuing. They have very few boxholders and serve very few people, so it is logical that rural route service would be better. But this is not the case in every instance. I want to mention four specific examples. One is the Dickson post office, where there are approximately 30 boxholders in the village and 17 boxholders in the rural area. The cost of this post office is \$1,800 a year. The Minister of Communications said it was \$2,000 a year, but that is wrong; it is \$1,800 a year. The revenue is small, but I maintain that because of the traditional service going back more than 60 years that this post office has rendered, there is no justification for closing it now.

A petition has been signed by every citizen served by this post office, protesting the closing. I am concerned that when I consulted the Minister of Communications, and later investigated the situation on the spot, I learned that in November an official of the post office in Calgary visited the community; he assured the postmaster at Dickson that he had no intention of closing it but was merely investigating the rural route service in the area. However, four weeks later, on December 17, an order was issued to close the post office.

Many of the arguments stated by the Minister of Communications in letters to me are just not logical nor do they actually state the facts. While this is a very small post office, and there is another only a couple of miles away, it will cost far more than \$1,800 to provide the service that the people in the village and the area south of the village must have if the post office was closed and rural route delivery substituted. There is no economic gain or saving by closing that post office, and 100 per cent of the people involved want it kept open because it meets their particular needs.

Why is an approach not made to the people to determine whether they want the post office to close or stay open? Why does the government not deal with the matter in a forthright manner and consider the costs of offering a substitute service through the extension of rural route No. 1 from Innisfail? As far as I can determine, this will be much more than the cost of maintaining the post office. No consideration has been given to

public opinion, to the economic effects or to the local problems of this post office.

I refer another post office to the attention of the Minister of Communications, the country post office of Bergen. It is true that this post office involves an expenditure of only \$1,000 by the Post Office Department, but it serves 50 householders. The Postmaster General says it serves 44. I beg to differ with him, because it serves 50 householders, not 44. A petition has been forwarded to him asking that this post office be retained. Of the 50 householders, 40 agreed this is the type of service they want. To provide rural route delivery to the people who are involved in this remote foothills community will cost much more than the \$1,000 which is now involved in maintaining the Bergen post office.

The third post office I wish to bring to the attention of the Postmaster General and Minister of Communications is that of Westward Ho. The cost of this post office is \$1,800 a year. The income last year, as far as stamps and money orders were concerned, was less than \$700. It serves 63 householders. The department says 56, but I count 67.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am afraid I have to interrupt the hon. member because his time has expired.

Mr. Thompson: Might I finish with one sentence, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Regretfully, this is not the practice we have adopted.

Mr. Gérard Loiselle (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the remarks of the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson). I am sorry the hon. member started by saying that the minister was not giving care because he was not present in the House. I can assure the member for Red Deer that the minister is in Montreal on post office business this evening. Surely, the hon. member for Red Deer is aware that if he has a problem with post offices in villages in his riding, Montreal also—has a problem with its post offices; and that is why the minister is in Montreal tonight.

I will be glad to bring the hon. member's remarks to the minister's attention on his return. In his absence the minister asked me to provide the member with the following information. I am sure, from the remarks of the hon. member, that he will not be satisfied with this information, but it is what I have been asked to give him.