

Post Office Act

the culprit since it stipulates that mail should be home delivered only where population reaches 2,000 families.

Now, to get 2,000 families in an old section of Hull, for instance, at a time when lots sold were not over 40 feet wide, or in old sectors of Trois-Rivières or still in certain parts of Quebec City where houses are as close to one another as boxes in a warehouse, it is rather easy. But today, for the greatest enjoyment and satisfaction of all, town-planning committees have been set up in our smaller towns. Mayors are forward-looking and aldermen are doing their job very well. Wider streets have been laid out. Lot standards have also been established so that everybody may have some space, a front lawn, flowers and trees.

Apartment buildings being very rare in those small modern towns, it follows that before the figure of, for instance, 1,500 households may be obtained, people have to walk or take an opportunity to go to the post office which is sometimes one mile from their homes.

When we ask the minister to establish a sub-post office, he informs us that such a service would be possible in municipalities which already have home delivery.

The point I want to make is that today, the fewer services we have as a result of certain regulations, the less chance we have of obtaining them.

And I repeat that when a municipality asks for a sub-post office, it must already enjoy home delivery service. One does not go without the other.

I think that this is a point really deserving consideration, in order to reach solutions which would bring about some equity.

You take out a newspaper subscription. If the paper comes by mail, the price is the same whether the service is good or bad. The newspaper people cannot do anything about it.

When a citizen mails a letter, it always costs the same price, whether the addressee gets it from the mailman or has to walk a mile to fetch it.

Since the Liberal government has tried to eliminate regional discrepancies, I feel the minister in charge of the Post Office (Mr. Côté) should leave no stone unturned to ensure uniformity of the Canadian postal service.

I should also like to refer to the building of post office buildings which is, I know, a responsibility of the Department of Public Works, whose plans are generally good. It has managed to put up quite luxurious and spacious buildings at not too high a cost. But what is unsatisfactory is the exterior finish of these post offices.

For instance, we know that Portneuf supplies great quantities of granite and stone for the building trade. I still remember quite clearly that a post office had been built at Saint-Marc-des-Carrières, where all the stone used for the Parliament buildings in Ottawa came from. At present, Portneuf still supplies stone to Montreal and Toronto.

Moreover, a quarry at Rivière-à-Pierre, another community in Portneuf, also ships most of its granite production to Italy and to several other parts of the world. It

[Mr. Godin.]

also happens that some of it comes back to us from New York and even from California. It is rather strange, but that is what actually happens. We export our raw material to other countries and they come back to us as finished products.

However, what is even more strange is that when the department recommends the construction of a post office in a community, specifications call for a finish of imported artificial stone.

I realize that the Postmaster General is not completely responsible for this situation, but again, I feel that he should bring to the attention of his colleague, the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Laing), the situation I have just mentioned with regard to the construction of post offices in the Quebec area, especially in Portneuf.

I know that as a rule, plans are mass-produced. I also know that artificial stone manufacturers make enough profits to promote the sale of their products. However, the minister will agree with me that whether it be wood or stone, an imitation can never match the real thing. A fine and well finished wood is always an eye-pleaser. The same goes for stone and granite. One does not need to be an expert to know that granite is durable, and will keep its colour. And, since the granite found in Rivière-à-Pierre comes in several colours, I urge the minister to advise the architects of the Department of Public Works to get in touch with the managers of the quarries in Portneuf, so that our post offices may be built with good and cheap materials that, above all, will not lose their colour.

● (4:50 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, when most politicians begin to speak they say, "It won't be long, will it?" I shall only take a few minutes before the minister responds to some of the observations made in the discussion of Bill C-240.

When appearing before the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, the previous Postmaster General made it very clear that there would be no further closings of post offices in this country until a thorough investigation was made of the social and economic conditions in the areas affected. I should like to remind the Acting Postmaster General, no doubt soon to be the fully-fledged Postmaster General, that this commitment was given and I hope that he will honour it. I hope residents of affected areas will have an opportunity to present their views.

Not too long ago a statement was made before the committee that the Post Office Department intended to take every possible measure to reduce the deficit and to arrive at a balanced budget within a few years. Unfortunately, at that time the words "reasonable" and "social" were left out of the commitment. It must be realized that the postal service in Canada helps unite the country from east to west and that this is very important. Vast distances must be contended with and we realize that this adds considerably to the cost of the postal service. If the