

*Supply—Post Office*

to \$5,000 a year. I notice that in 1961-62 fiscal year 110 small post offices were put up in Canada. In addition there were 52 under consideration, and 1,121 were situated in federal buildings. At that time there were 940 post offices still in rented accommodation. I do not know whether this means post offices which occupy the whole of the rented premises or not; I do not think it would include small post offices occupying space rented in a store or some other business of that type. Checking the figures I find that in the 1962-63 fiscal year there were 106 small post offices under consideration, 59 occupied, of which 52 had been started in the previous year. The number of post offices located in federal buildings had increased from 1,121 to 1,310. This left 700 or 800 post offices in rented accommodation.

I believe it is a good thing that the construction of post offices now comes under the jurisdiction of the Post Office Department. Previously the Post Office Department decided whether or not a building should be built and made suggestions as to its location, and then the Department of Public Works carried out the actual construction. I have become convinced over the years that plans for building small buildings of this kind become smothered under the paper work which goes on in the departments. I know that on previous occasions when we have been trying to get some action with regard to buildings of this type, the department here felt it was co-operating but the men in the field never got around to finding and securing suitable lots on which to place them. If these buildings are to be constructed under the winter works program, sites must be secured in the early summer or in the early fall.

I have in mind one small post office in particular that was built in 1905. Then it was moved into the town where the railway came through in 1912, and it has been moved once since then. On checking this post office I found that in 1962 the Post Office Department spent \$937 in renovating a building that could have been bought from the owner for \$700. I feel that this type of expenditure is wrong and there should be more concentration on looking into the question of building post offices.

I was interested in the remarks of the hon. member for Wellington South when he said the post office should be the No. 1 building in a town. I endorse what the hon. member said in this regard. I have in mind a particular town that is completely modern. Within the last four or five years the town has spent

[Mr. Watson (Assiniboia).]

\$120,000 on installing sewer and water systems, we have gas in the town and there are 2½ miles of cement sidewalk; but the building in which the post office is situated is the most deplorable type of building one can imagine. I would urge the minister to look into this type of post office and see what he can do to improve the accommodation and working conditions of the postmasters who run these offices. I would like to make a comment on an item which is to be found on page 353 of the estimates book. This is just a passing remark, but I notice that in this item, which relates to the Post Office Department, the mileage allowance has been reduced in the 1964-65 estimates by \$25,000. In the next item one sees that the boot allowance has been increased by \$26,000. Perhaps when the minister replies to these questions he will explain whether he thinks that shoe leather is cheaper than rubber on automobiles.

Mr. Chairman, the minister has given a very brief outline of Post Office Department revenues. I have always been one that believes that wherever possible a department should be made to pay its own way. If the rates which apply in various departments should be raised slightly in order to cover the deficit in those departments, I would support any legislation to this end.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Plourde:** Mr. Chairman, my first words will be to congratulate the Postmaster General (Mr. Nicholson) for the prompt and attentive manner with which he replies to our requests, and the clearness of his answers.

On the other hand, I want to point out to him a gap which seems to exist in his department and which is prejudicial to the letter carriers in the province of Quebec. As a matter of fact, I am told that the number of families which each carrier has to serve, in the course of mail distribution, number about 800 in the province of Quebec. If we compare the cities of Halifax and Quebec, which cover about the same surface expressed in square miles, though one is less populous than the other, we find that the average number of families allotted to each letter carrier ranges from 500 to 600.

I am told that in Ottawa a mail carrier serves from 600 to 700 families.

If that is the case, the route of our mail carriers in Quebec is too long—we might even say excessive—for the same salary.

I therefore ask the Postmaster General to be so kind as to give consideration to the matter in order to be equitable to our mail