

*Postal Service*

ensure that all residential communities are guaranteed the same level of postal service.

The post office is a vital institution in our small communities. Small towns do not have the same choice of postal services as are found in large communities. The larger communities, for example, have drugstores which help the post office. Smaller communities do not have home delivery, a service which is found in larger communities. For this reason residents of small towns use their post office much more than do the residents of larger towns. Saturday service is essential to smaller communities because in many cases the people are working away from the smaller towns and come to town on a Saturday specifically to do business with the post office and their shopping. It is imperative to these smaller communities that an all-day Saturday service be made available.

Post office lobbies must be left open after hours so that residents may pick up their mail. I think specifically of a small community like Golden where the post office closes at five o'clock. In Golden many loggers work out in the bush and when they come in after five o'clock they are unable to get into the lobby of the post office in order to get their mail out of the postal box. There have been suggestions that this is because of vandalism in post offices. If that is the case, then we should be looking to the law enforcement agencies. We do not close our stores because there is vandalism, nor should we close the post office. It is strictly a matter of law enforcement. Those postal services should be open for a decent time in the evening so that people may pick up their mail.

I received a commitment from the minister that there would not be such a cutback, but to date the situation has not been corrected. The government must make a commitment not to close post offices in such areas.

Another area at which we must take a serious look is the importance of ensuring that all communities receive the same kind of service. In new subdivisions door to door delivery often ends on one side of the street, and because someone was unfortunate enough to build a new home across the street or a block away, their mail is put in a box which is a half a mile away from the house and they must pick it up. However, these unfortunates pay the same taxes, so they should be given the same opportunities and the same services as the group within the delivery zone. How can the government defend a policy where people on one side of the street receive daily service and people on the other side do not? It should not be a political decision or a decision which is made during an election that there will be postal service to the other side of the street or that postal service will be discontinued if a certain member is elected.

I would like to make a comment on something that was said in the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates on June 3. The hon. member for Vaudreuil (Mr. Herbert) suggested that nobody in Canada should have daily home delivery of mail. He could see no reason why the aged, the infirmed and others less fortunate than himself should not have to trudge through the ice and snow to pick up their mail. That attitude was very disturbing to me, but perhaps more disturb-

ing was the attitude taken by the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet), who did not take the position that one would expect from a minister of the Crown. The Postmaster General did not tell the hon. member that daily home delivery of mail in Canada is a service of the Government of Canada which will be defended right down the line. He did not chastise this government member for not seeing that point. On the contrary, he said the following:

If I were to tell you that we will curtail the door to door service which is given, I would have a union on my hands tomorrow morning.

It is a shame that the press did not pick up on that remark in committee by the Postmaster General. In this country where the postal unions are blamed even for bad weather, it is certainly interesting to know that they are the only group standing between where we are now and the total elimination of daily home delivery in Canadian cities. Every member in this House, I would venture to say, has received a letter of complaint about the postal service. Petitions with regard to the postal service have been introduced. There is a suggestion in the Speech from the Throne that the Post Office Department will become a Crown corporation in the very near future.

I would urge that this motion be allowed to stand. I ask all hon. members on both sides of the House to give it an opportunity to stand in order that we may look at the management and at what is taking place in the post office. To allow the mismanagement of this department to occur and to blame it on the workers is, I think, a great injustice. This is largely the main problem in the Post Office Department today.

In conclusion, I would point out that no one wants to see the improvement of the postal service come on the backs of the post office workers. Although they were happy with the recent settlement of the CUPW contract, they are concerned that the government may try to improve the service by doubling the workloads, which is hardly the formula for labour peace in the post office. This is not the proper attitude. It is imperative at this time that we zero in on the major problems of the post office. The contract which was signed today includes some changes to the working conditions and privileges of the postal workers. It includes a clause that in the future, if there are lay-offs, there will be replacements, and that if there is to be centralization in larger cities, there will not be cutbacks in the small rural post offices.

We must all recognize the need for postal services, particularly in smaller communities. They must have the services that they require. It was a tremendous saving to move mail transportation from the trains to airplanes. I think we must recognize there have been some savings there. We must also recognize that management of the postal department must be improved and taken out of the political arena. As a Crown corporation it would present estimates to this House for approval and there would be some supervision of the way it carried out its duties and responsibilities.

• (1710)

A short while ago, when we faced the possibility of a labour strike in the post office, I was shocked to learn that the