

*Post Office*

effective in April, and not so long ago, at the beginning of the year, on March 16, 1977, a communiqué from the Post Office Department to its employees, the postmasters of the entire country, clearly said: Prices are being increased and you should not expect—I would like to read the second item of information sheet SF-7717 dated March 16, 1977. For the minister's information, this communiqué said: Rolls and booklets of the new 12 cent stamps will not be available for at least one year.

Prices had just been changed. This year, the rates will be increased from 12 cents to 14 cents, but the post offices in northwest Quebec have not yet received the 12 cent stamps. And this is called a good service and a healthy administration.

It is easy to see how the Post Office is administered. Enormous deficits are accumulated. What is the minister proposing to solve this problem? I do not want to know what the minister is asking of Canadian taxpayers to pay for the deficits accumulated because of his bad management; I would like to know what he intends to do to reduce the excessive cost of the Post Office Department and to improve the service provided to the entire country. Then, people might be interested in paying a bit more for the stamps that they will stick on their envelopes.

The minister says that his experts are shocked at the decrease in the number of mail items. This is understandable since they are asked to pay twice as much for four times less service. This will continue of course, but it is always the small municipalities which suffer. In the release attached to his speech the minister says that it will be possible to save 50 cents on postage for a ten-pound airmail parcel or \$2 on a 50-pound airmail parcel sent from Montreal to Toronto. It is all very well for those cities. But it is the peripheral areas which make a massive use of the mail service that finally have to pay the cost of bad management in the Post Office Department. In major centres, as the minister says in his speech, there is electronic communication for banking transactions; of course, in large cities, there is a mail service between businesses and industries. Why? Because the Post Office Department does not provide adequate service. But it is the people in peripheral and far away areas who must shoulder the heavy losses resulting from this administrative chaos. As I was saying a while ago, a letter needs from a week to a week and a half to get to the next parish, because automation forces it to pass first through a distribution centre, then through a sorting centre, then to return to the distribution centre and finally from there to the next village. That is what automation has meant in addition to a \$568 million deficit.

We are not satisfied with the minister's decision generally, and I am anxious to see the minister rise and hear him tell us of the way he intends to solve the administrative problems afflicting his department, instead of always burdening the taxpayers who are the users of the postal service with the effects of wrong decisions.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I suggest to the minister that all hon. members are interested indeed in the Post Office, as he said as he was about to conclude his own speech, and so are

those who are using the Post Office as a means of communication within our constituencies, namely, the people who are entitled to adequate services throughout this country and who are not getting them.

As the minister said, we still find some places where they have to open new offices, while in some remote areas, with 10-year lease contracts, they have to renew those contracts, and pay increases to people who rent those premises. That is still under discussion. Those things cannot be paid. There are some delays and they said: We have to increase prices to cover expenses, but in many cases, they do not pay for expenses and they delay payments.

Then, generally speaking, Mr. Speaker, that is simply acceptance. The minister stated indirectly today that he knows his department is badly administered but that all he is prepared to do is to overtax postal service users as much as the others who will have to pay taxes. All this party did since they are in government is to let things get rotten and they continue to charge and to blame Canadian people.

• (1602)

[English]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. This is the kind of statement which is an announcement of a change that is going to take place at some time. Therefore, I realize there should be questions asked today, but they ought to be of a general nature. Opportunities ought to arise to pursue the matter in detail on other occasions, but I think it appropriate to recognize two or three questioners today.

**Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has announced an increase in the first-class mail rate and has said, if I follow him correctly, that a press release will be issued by his department announcing what the increases will be in other categories. It has been my experience that successive postmasters general have been very quick to point out the deficits in first-class mail and increases in the rates, but have been somewhat reluctant to give the House information about the deficits incurred in carrying other classes of mail. I think particularly of—

• (1612)

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Junk mail.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** —junk mail and advertising on the basis of household deliveries, some newspapers and other advertising material. It does not seem to be satisfactory merely to tell us that the cost of first-class mail will go from 12 cents to 14 cents, and leave it to a press release from his department to give us the other information.

Can the minister now tell us what the deficit has been in the other classes of mail and, by comparison, what the increase in the costs of these other categories of mail will be and what that increased cost will do to reduce the deficits in those various classes of mail? If he does not have the information with him now, will he undertake to present it by way of a statement on