

*Post Office Act*

made a change, denounce him for being weak and irresolute. I commend the hon. gentleman for being sensitive to the urging of many hon. members on this side of the house as well as to his own noble committee of 35 members from the caucus of the Liberal party.

Having spent all my political career as a backbencher in the conclaves of caucus, I know how important it is that a minister be sensitive to the views of backbenchers, his parliamentary colleagues. Indeed, a good minister should be sensitive both before and after he takes important decisions—decisions for which he will expect the undying support of his parliamentary friends. But the minister will not expect me to avoid noting my disappointment that he was not more forthcoming to parliament in connection with his change of mind. Caucus is important, and so are caucus committees, but there is one body which is more important than caucus, more important than any caucus committee, and that is parliament itself. This is the place in which to make announcements. This is the place in which to indicate changes of ministerial intention.

I am glad the minister dropped a hint at the city of London. I am very fond of the city of London; it happens to be the home of outstanding political leaders in this country. But I would like him to recall that this house is the arena in which to make the kind of hints he made on that occasion; they should be made here rather than in the course of public speeches.

I presume the hon. gentleman has reflected upon the changed circumstances. I presume he knows the dangers which are before him as he makes this partial reversal of his previous point of view. I was interested in his statement that there was no demand for mail delivery on Saturday in urban areas. I presume that urban dwellers hand back their mail to the postman as he comes along. I am inclined to think that people living in the cities still like to get mail. I suppose that a communication from a loved one is as well received by a person living in a city of 25,000 as one living in a village of 150. Possibly the minister has made some calculations about this and knows what the distinction is. Incidentally, he may find considerable difficulty in a country like Canada where the shading between urban, suburban and rural is not easy to appreciate.

• (4:20 p.m.)

I am wondering who will be involved in getting the mail out to the rural areas. Most [Mr. Macquarrie.]

rural routes emanate from a fairly large centre. If the people in the large centres are freed from work on Saturday, who is going to process and sort the mail which the lucky ruralites are going to get on Saturday? No doubt these are things which the minister has thought out very carefully, but as yet we have not been illuminated or enlightened on the subject of just what this will all mean.

A few days ago I asked the minister if he would not agree that a committee of this house was a better forum for dealing with these important postal matters than a committee of his own caucus, however eminent. It may be interesting to recall that the *Hansard* reporter did not catch that. Mr. Speaker, I never think my utterances are so vital that they need be corrected for posterity but the reporter had me down as asking if a standing committee was not a better vehicle than the committee of the whole house. I was convinced that this very important, tremendously important piece of legislation, should be referred to a committee of the house.

This was obvious from the time we first heard about the minister's far-sweeping changes and widespread alterations and I submit, Mr. Speaker, that recent events, recent communications and recent protests have made such a course of action of all the more compelling. There has been widespread criticism from the press and the public. Interested parties have sought to have their views heard. There is widespread concern and confusion as to what is involved in this very elaborate piece of legislation. There has been insufficient time for some seriously affected groups to give thorough study to the impact of the new rates.

The minister is right when he said that there have been tremendously interesting editorials on the subject. He said once that the newspapers seemed to be pretty well on his side, but I do not note that type of response from the newspapers I read. I did notice an interesting editorial in the *Journal-Pioneer*, published in Summerside, P.E.I., headed "Poorer Mail Service At Higher Rates." It reads:

If we keep on getting doses of the just society we are going to start yearning for a bit of old fashioned injustice. Somehow life wasn't all bad in those bad old unjust days—

It is true that we are becoming more and more a five day work week society with two days of leisure on the week end. Yet it is kind of silly, as we said in this space once before, to go to the expense of rushing a letter by air from Vancouver to Summerside, to take an example, and then to