

*Postal Service*

would glow with pride. And when the first report came through saying in effect that I should mechanize the Post Office and modernize its physical plants I would glow even more, \$250,000 more confident that what I had been told from all sources for ten months was in fact true. Reports are a poor excuse for action.

The minister will no doubt give the excuse that the buildings in Toronto and Montreal are inadequate, and God knows they are. That excuse, however, has become just that—an excuse. In committee over two months ago the minister spoke grandly of taking action to ameliorate the terrible working conditions in these major bottlenecks—improvements to take place some five to seven years from now money permitting. But only the other day the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said that expenditure by government and its creatures would have to be cut back. Where does this lead us, Mr. Speaker? I can only conclude from the minister's statements and that of the Prime Minister that Canadians are to be condemned to inadequate postal service for some years to come. We cannot let the minister use tears over the inadequate conditions in Toronto and Montreal as an excuse for action now to eliminate these bottleneck conditions.

We know too, and I think we can predict that the minister will tell us today, of his study to be brought down next month outlining Toronto's needs. But like all else in his department this report is future futuristic. It jumps over today's needs to talk about the 1890's.

**An hon. Member:** 1990's.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Yes, 1990's. I must have been thinking of conditions today. What we want to know is which of the many ways of moving today's mail today the Postmaster General intends to use.

Another diversion that he is almost certain to offer us is talk of his crown corporation idea, one which is supposedly being studied but even before the studies are completed is rapidly being adopted by the Postmaster General so that he may claim paternity not only for the studies but for the idea. We all look forward to September when Kates, Peat and Marwick bring down their study on this subject. But we are somewhat sceptical of the minister offering this report as a panacea for today's bad mail service. Will a crown corporation structure heal the distrust between the workers and management of the Post Office? Must we wait for September to start the mechanization schemes suggested by the

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

minister's consultants? It would be wrong for him to offer this report as evidence that the mail service will improve in the immediate future, as it must.

And as a final rationalization for the upset, for the disruption and, indeed, occasional chaos in his department, the minister will no doubt speak to us of diminishing deficits and freeing funds for welfare, for education, and for regional development. On this minister such suggestions are ill-fitting robes indeed. For this is the same minister who will divert many millions of dollars of Canada's resources, both public and private, from the very programs of which he speaks in order to foster the development of the favoured child of his department, Telesat Canada, and refuse the private sector the opportunity to put the satellite into service.

Coming from this minister this excuse is almost grotesque, for while on the one hand as a proponent of Telesat Canada he speaks of the need to extend, at great cost, television to that remaining 5 per cent of Canadians without it, on the other hand he withdraws in the name of economy from every Canadian the element of promptness and dependability in mail service which was so central to our national life. The minister, to say the least, has a strange sense of economy and a stranger sense of priorities. His evaluation of the written word as against the electronic message shows a wide disparity.

For communities of 400 or 500 he is prepared to engage in the expenditure of perhaps a quarter of a million dollars to bring them television, but in communities of the same size he will close down post offices that lose a few hundred dollars a year and he will offer a rural route service so that Canadians may buy their postage stamps and expensive money orders in subzero weather by flagging down the mail courier. I am not against the north and I love television too, in colour or in black and white, but let us have some sense of justice, some sense of propriety here. Let us not take a certain group of people and cut them off from standard communications in the name of economy and then with a lavish, generous hand splash out to others all sorts of conveniences at great cost. Let the Minister of Communications on the right know what the Postmaster General on the left is doing.

In some ways, Mr. Speaker, I need not have recited the litany of faulty service now being offered by the minister, nor need I have enumerated the problems, or should I say the running sores, in his department. The Postmaster General perhaps knows more about