

Post Office

against another get to you. Remember individual work measurement.

If morale was low among post office employees before this, you can just imagine, Mr. Speaker, how deeply morale is going to plummet in face of this sort of ad hoc trial and error experimentation with the lives of postal employees who at one time were the best and most enthusiastic of any group in Canada.

Another problem concerns decentralization. Regional areas are being used for the purpose of experimentation in managerial extravaganzas, such as the module system I have referred to, and one region is played off against another. Again, this affects the morale of the employees. As they say when you talk to them, it is like being in a three-ring circus, only in this case there are four rings and each is doing its own thing so there is bound to be disruption in the over-all efficiency of postal employees.

In addition, casual workers are being employed more and more. This was disclosed in the reply to a question to which I have already referred; the number of permanent employees is going down while the number of casuals is going up. Question No. 1544 put on the order paper by myself asked the following:

1. What is the estimated saving to the Post Office Department from the installation of the new postal code?
2. What are the reasons for this saving?
3. How many postal employees have been replaced by the automated system?

The first answer was as follows:

1. Savings over 17 years (beginning in 1971) were estimated at \$134,000,000 (discounted dollars).

That sounds like the accountability of the UIC when it was going off into the wide blue yonder.

2. Savings will occur as a result of changes in future hiring patterns and increased efficiency in the department.

The future hiring patterns refers to the increased tendency to hire casuals who will not have their positions confirmed and it will be easy to get rid of them when the time comes. The answer to part 3 was "none". But just wait until automation gets underway. This is the sword of Damocles that will be hanging over the heads of the postal employees and which accounts for the low morale that is all too evident.

Another point I suppose I should make is that the post office is still insisting on operating on a pay-as-you-go basis. The estimates for 1973-74 gives this as the objective of the Post Office Department:

To provide postal services to the people of Canada at reasonable rates and at a standard of service adequate to meet their needs without incurring subsidization from general taxation.

That is to be found at page 19-6 of the estimates.

The Auditor General gets into the act, of course, when a department is as badly disorganized as this one. He refers in his report to attempts by the Post Office Department to deal with its deficit position. He reminds the Postmaster General in paragraph 176 of his report that the royal commission on government organization recommended that "an annual grant be made by parliament in an amount sufficient to cover the costs of the post office in handling second class mail", and of the recommendation by the public accounts committee that "the Post Office

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

Department or Parliament immediately find ways and means of covering the loss of the Post Office Department in handling second class mail". Then he reminds the Postmaster General that these recommendations have not been acted upon. In other words, there is no recognition that the Post Office Department, like the railways, satellites and all the other means of communication, are basic to the well being of Canada as a whole.

His report also deals with the excursion of the Postmaster General into the realm of private enterprise. In paragraph 177 he refers to the fact that, as well as carrying on philatelic and other postal business in many post offices, the Post Office Department, hoping to make an honest dollar and to account for the deficit arising from the loss of legitimate postal business, sells coin sets, commemorative spoons, art prints, Canadian handicrafts, picture post-cards, etc. It is almost becoming like a department store.

The Auditor General reminds the Postmaster General that there is no established policy in this regard, and that there is no accounting in relation to this source of funds. Consequently the Auditor General does not know whether it has been profitable or not, but he says it is questionable whether the sale of non-postal items falls within the powers granted to the Postmaster General under the Post Office Act, Revised Statutes of Canada chapter P-14. He feels that this matter requires an opinion for the Department of Justice. I am sure that many members have been receiving complaints from private businesses about this invasion of their field of business. As the Auditor General says, the Postmaster General is acting without authorization in a desperate attempt to meet the deficit of his department, and in so doing is incurring more and more antipathy from the people of Canada, whom the post office is supposed to serve and whom it had served efficiently down through the years until the last six years.

To bring these matters to a conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I said I would wind up on an optimistic note. I suggest that what we need to deal with complaints in the post office is a complaint department similar to that set up by the Unemployment Insurance Commission. This would allow the minister to keep in closer touch with the public and the facts, which I suggest are known at grass root levels.

● (1230)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps I should interrupt the hon. member at this time to bring to his attention and the attention of the House the fact that his time has expired. The hon. member may continue with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Dinsdale: I can conclude my remarks in two sentences, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the generosity of the House. The Postmaster General should, in a meaningful way, consult with postal employees. In this way he might avoid conflicts that result from the arbitrary introduction of the modular system. This is obviously going to be a big issue.

I congratulate the employees of the post office department for their tolerance and willingness to serve. They have been aggravated beyond endurance and, had it not been for their sense of responsibility, we would likely