

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Lang:** The hon. member asks what is the phone number. He should know that we have just announced the creation of this western arm.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Lang:** He might also be interested to know that the western farmers and municipal representatives with whom I have met in the last few days are delighted at the prospect of this western arm being set up in Saskatoon, and delighted it is the western arm which will be conducting most of the hearings with respect to these applications. It will be located as quickly as we can find the space in which to house it. It is true, of course, that as a result of the booming economy in western Canada it is not always easy to find office space these days.

**Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar):** Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Deputy Prime Minister. The reply just given by the Minister of Transport is nothing but a joke. I do not think farmers in western Canada or, for that matter, anybody in western Canada, are going to believe a word of what he says.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister investigate these misleading and slanted, political articles which have appeared in western newspapers to determine whether they ought not more properly to be paid for by the Liberal party rather than by the taxpayers through the Department of Transport?

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, there are others in the House more capable of investigating politics than I am.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

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## POST OFFICE

## RURAL MAIL DELIVERY SERVICE

**Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Postmaster General. Now that the hon. gentleman, on the eve of an election, has capitulated to complaints from all parts of Canada over the deterioration of mail service in urban centres resulting from the freeze on door-to-door delivery, will he respond positively to the long-standing complaints about the freeze on rural mail delivery contracts which has existed since 1974 and has resulted in serious deterioration in rural mail delivery service in all parts of the country?

**Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Postmaster General):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think I have capitulated. I simply listen to the people and do whatever gives them better service. That is why I have decided, along with my colleagues in the cabinet, to give home delivery to most areas where there is such a disparity in the service. I think this was a good move, and I hope some members of the opposition who have been writing to me and complaining about it are happy because this is a government which does not promise, but acts.

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

As far as the question about the \$10,000 limit on rural letter carriers is concerned, this is a very difficult subject and I shall explain why. The Post Office is the only service which has authority to award a \$10,000 contract without public tender. We have increased from time to time the value of the contract to reach \$10,000 within the limits permitted by the Post Office Act. When the amount goes above \$10,000, we are obliged to go to public tender. That is the law.

The hon. member asks me why we do not change the act. We intend to discuss this matter when the Post Office Act comes up for review. But I would like to ask him this: to what limits should we go without calling for public tenders? Should it be \$15,000? Should it be \$30,000? I imagine we would then be getting complaints perhaps from people in his own riding that they do not have occasion to take part in the tendering process. Such extension of the limit might be unjust to those who wanted to obtain contracts and wanted to put forward public tenders. This is a matter we shall have to discuss in committee or when the Post Office Act is amended.

**Mr. Dinsdale:** Mr. Speaker, successive postmasters general have undertaken to resolve this rapid deterioration in rural service, but the excuse for not doing so—as in the case of the letter carrier freeze—has always been lack of sufficient funds. Now that funds have been made available for restoring service to citizens in urban areas, would the Postmaster General not agree to delay costly implementation of the metric system in the Post Office, commonly known as metric madness, so that funds could be made available to provide for the fair compensation of rural mail carriers?

**Mr. Lamontagne:** Mr. Speaker, every time the hon. member asks questions it is really depressing, because they are always about deteriorating services. He has been in the House for a long time. I know it has been depressing for him to be on that side for so long, but I would ask him to be more optimistic, more objective. A lot of good work is being done in the Post Office. We are moving ahead against competition and even against depressing remarks from the opposition. I will be able to give the hon. member an answer to his question tomorrow when we go into the transport committee.

● (1450)

## REQUEST FOR INCREASED SERVICE IN WESTERN CANADA

**Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same minister. In view of the increased service by the letter carriers, is there any guarantee that the faster growing areas in western Canada will receive their proportionate share of increased service?

**Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Postmaster General):** Mr. Speaker, this is proof of the fact that it is not only because of the reactions that we change the policy of the Post Office. I would say that, perhaps more than the Liberal members, the Conservatives would profit by this move, considering this is a very fair government which gives to all Canadians the service they deserve, even in Conservative areas. I can tell the hon. member that western areas such as Edmonton, Saskatoon and