

Canada Post Corporation Act

found too frequently in the Post Office today. If it was not for couriers, there would have been a lot more bankruptcies in this country. The point I am making is that an amendment to this section is required. All we are asking the hon. minister to do is to provide an alternative if and when the Post Office does not cut the mustard.

Another point is that during prolonged strikes, such as we have had, we must have some other alternative. There is simply no way of carrying on, or to even ensure that pensioners or people on compensation receive their cheques. The Alberta government, when I happened to be there, had to set up its own courier service in order to get the cheques out. I suppose the Canadian government did the same thing.

Again, what we are asking is that we should give the Post Office every opportunity to cut the mustard, but, if it does not, let us not make this act so exclusively monopolistic that we will then not be able to do anything about it.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, the amendment to Bill C-42 we are addressing tonight is of particular interest to me. My father started working for the Post Office in 1951. Of course, when I came along in 1952 I had many a nap on a sack of mail or on a number of bags of mail. One could say that I have grown up with the Post Office business as we know it. I am familiar with a lot of the work which the postal people and staff do. I am familiar with the fact that many of them work hard and seriously do attempt to deliver our mail in an efficient manner and to ensure that all of us get the service we require. They demonstrate a lot of care for people, particularly when we consider places like my riding up in the north country where a lot of people are very dependent on the mail. Some of them, up until recently, have not had TV or radio. Items such as catalogues which arrive on their doorstep are important, significant and mean a great deal in their lives.

I think all of us look forward to the mail. It brings us good news; of course, it brings us bad news as well. We are always familiar with the many problems faced by the department. I am familiar with them, having grown up so close to it: problems with budget, problems with adequate staff, and certainly problems with adequate facilities. All of those problems affect the service, and affect the ability of the staffs in these small Post Offices to carry on their jobs.

There are a number of problems facing the Post Office today. I do not think this is a particularly new situation. In fact, looking back in history, one of the things I have heard is that if it had not been for the Post Office, the Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker's second wife would have been his first wife. So, the Post Office has had these problems for a long period of time. As I have mentioned, they do affect our lives to a great extent.

One of the problems we are certainly faced with today, and one of the reasons this bill must be explored and looked at which has been mentioned tonight, is that the Post Office has to deal with so many different departments of government in order to run efficiently. These include the Public Service Commission, the Treasury Board and public works. We have

all heard the expression that there are too many chiefs and not enough Indians. We are familiar with that and the problems it creates. We know the difficulties we are faced with when we must deal with so many different departments. It is impossible to have efficient planning, it is impossible to make efficient decisions, and it is virtually impossible to provide efficient service. Therefore, this is one of the significance and important matters to which this bill addresses itself. We certainly should be looking at it.

Another problem the Post Office has been faced with and I refer to the annual report of the Post Office for 1980, is that if we look at the charts, we will notice that there is a large gap between revenue and the expenditures. The Post Office has been losing money. I understand that one of the goals of Bill C-42 is to face that problem and attempt to make the Post Office financially self-sufficient. At that point we must immediately ask ourselves a number of questions.

In my area, as I have mentioned before, the Post Office is not only a very important part of our business lives, but also our social lives. When one starts talking about financial efficiency, what comes to mind are some of the problems we have been facing in the past that have given us difficulty. We then begin to wonder, when this efficiency comes in, whether the things we have been promised today, the things we have been looking at and working on so hard, will be threatened with cut-offs.

Let me just refer to a few communities in my riding. In the small town of Wembley, a lease has expired. New facilities are needed there. What will happen there? Will that lease not be fulfilled? Will that lease cease to exist? Will those people have to drive 30 miles to the next town to get their mail? Already it has been an on and off situation like a child with a flashlight. One day we might have a lease and the next day we might not.

One could look at the city of Grande Prairie which has been experiencing a tremendous amount of growth. As a result, postal services and facilities have fallen far behind what is needed. There are facilities for a population of maybe 10,000 to 12,000 when, in fact, facilities are needed to service a city population of over 20,000 and a large surrounding area. This is another problem we must consider. In other communities, Grimshaw, McLennan and so on, the problem is always the same. There is a serious shortage of space and facilities. As a result, their service is suffering.

We must consider whether Bill C-42, which would change the Post Office to a Crown corporation would, in effect, or in fact contribute to efficiency, whether it would provide better service and a situation which is greatly improved over the present. The key, of course, is the word "service". We have not been satisfied in the past. Certainly we hope this will work, but we expect to have a number of continuing problems.

In dealing specifically with the motion we are discussing tonight, I want to first refer to the clause which says: "—any item consisting solely of a newspaper, magazine, book or catalogue of goods"—. In our area of the country, we have a number of small newspapers. This seemingly insignificant little clause has a lot of impact on people up there. We have many newspaper people who are greatly affected by the definition of