

Postal Service Policies

alone, in the North Atlantic tending fishing traps or nets. Perhaps we have been unfair to a minister who does not know the joy of returning home after a lonely day at sea and ambling up to the post office for the mail and a friendly chat with his friends. Surely, if the minister knew what life in rural Newfoundland was all about we would not be suffering from this policy today. We recognize that it is not the minister's responsibility to maintain social contact in rural communities. We would ask him to remember, however, that the Post Office is a national government agency, not a business.

The purpose of the Post Office is to provide a service equally for all Canadians, not to show a profit. Surely, if we believed that running a postal service was a money-making thing we would have sense enough not to leave it up to the government but would let private enterprise step in and take over. But that is not what it is for. It is to provide a service for people which in our society, be it in Westmount or in West St. Modeste, we deem to be essential. The only difference, because in many cases this is about the only contact we have with the world outside our small communities, is that this takes on greater importance to us. I guess it is our misfortune and that of people living in countless small and sometimes remote communities all across Canada that we should have as our Postmaster General a gimlet-eyed businessman from Westmount who cannot see beyond his computers, his ticker-tape and his profit motive.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peddle: Perhaps our only chance lies in the hope that this minister will have the courage to recognize that he does not have the understanding, indeed the compassion, to recognize the very great importance to so many Canadians of this institution with which he is experimenting so frivolously. Therefore, like my colleague the hon. member for Hillsborough, I call on the minister, I implore the minister to do the people of rural Canada the service of tendering his resignation, because the Post Office is a human institution and his has not been a human policy. He does not have to resign acrimoniously. He can make a deal with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). It is simply a matter of his admitting that he is not fit for the job, and of the Prime Minister admitting that he should not have been appointed to it. This would make millions of Canadians happy.

[Mr. Peddle.]

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peddle: In fact, at times the implementation of the minister's policy has been positively brutal, not only in respect of its impact upon those who over the years have come to rely on their local post offices but on those who have worked faithfully in the service of the department. Recently I received a letter from a lady who has for a number of years diligently and in good faith served as postmistress of her village post office. Now she is unemployed and unable to receive unemployment insurance. They have closed down her post office, and because of the rules and regulations she is unable to obtain unemployment insurance.

• (3:20 p.m.)

The Post Office Department had to close down the post office at Goose Cove because it could no longer afford to pay the "exorbitant" salary of \$27 a week to the postmistress there. It seems that she did not sell enough stamps to enable the department to pay her \$27 a week. She could not justify her existence. If the Prime Minister of this country were willing to give up just one of the 75 or more people on his personal staff, the Postmaster General could probably have kept open or retained a dozen post offices like the one at Goose Cove.

This is the government of the just society. Although the Prime Minister denies now that he believes in slogans—he does not sloganize any more—the fact is that they are stuck with this one. This is the government of the just society. Of course, this is darned ridiculous. The other day I received a letter from a man who served the Post Office Department and the people in the St. Anthony area in my constituency for ten years delivering the mail. Recently it has not been too tough a job; things have become a little easier. However, before the days of roads in that area he had to carry the mail along a rugged coast in his boat or by dogteam, or sometimes even on his back to see that the mail got through. On May 1, some days ago, he received a letter from the district director of the postal services in Newfoundland that the department had decided to close the Cape Onion post office on May 6, the post office from which he delivered his mail, and they were beginning a new rural route on May 7. I should like to quote the concluding words of the letter, which read as follows:

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you most sincerely for your past faithful service and we wish you every success for the future.