

*Supply—Post Office*

successfully undertaken without unfair effects upon the staff, but I am wondering whether this immense sum, which is increasing all the time, is going to result in a machine which will operate successfully. It might be pointed out that the time at which it was to go into operation has been delayed and delayed, and it would be interesting to know whether the minister still expects to make the target date, which I believe is the end of this year.

There is another matter which is perhaps peculiar to one area in this country and to which I express strong objection. The department has a policy—perhaps it is not fair to call it a policy—or a practice in Quebec of encouraging people to obtain letters of reference from their members of parliament when they wish to obtain temporary employment with the post office. Shortly after my election, which was in August, I began to get phone calls from people who wanted letters of introduction in order to get jobs with the post office. In my innocence I said, "Oh, you do not need them. Just go down and tell them you want to work, and if they have a job for you they will take you on." However, I received so many of these calls all in the same tenor that it became quite obvious that it was a practice in the main post office in Montreal to expect a person coming in to have a letter of recommendation from his member.

I am not complaining, Mr. Chairman, that this is patronage in the sense that there is discrimination as between one member and another. Some of the people to whom I gave letters of recommendation got jobs with the department. Of course there were not quite as many as in the case of some of the more fortunate members. I find it difficult to identify the riding of the top recommender, but one member recommended some 428 people who obtained employment. The figures range from there down to the hon. member for Mount Royal, who had 14, and myself with 12, if my memory serves me correctly, with intermediate numbers of 200, 275, 305. To sum up the situation, out of 6,947 people who obtained temporary employment with the post office last Christmas in Montreal 4,465, or approximately two-thirds, supported their applications with letters from members of parliament.

This is not the way to have the best possible government service. The best possible government service arises from allowing the departments freedom to choose their people without being influenced and without forcing applicants into obtaining recommendations from their members. When we pointed this out to the minister in the committee he said

this was not their policy. I would hardly expect that it is, but I do suggest to the minister that in at least this one area of Canada it is the established practice, and I say that it should be curbed in the interests of good service on the part of the post office and so they may be left free to obtain the best possible type of employee.

Turning to the question of the people who work in the post office, their hopes for the future, their morale and things of that kind, I feel that there are inequities as between various centres across Canada, and that the department has not taken steps quickly enough to put all their people on the same level. In the case of a department which has 50,000 employees it is impossible for any member of parliament to make an adequate analysis that will cover the entire field. One has to, as the technical term is, sample a situation; and if the conclusions are satisfactory and it is apparent that the department is doing a satisfactory job, one goes no further. If the conclusions are unsatisfactory one draws it to the attention of the Postmaster General and the house in the hope that something will be done.

In one examination I was able to make of the status of post office employees I found that the situation could hardly be called satisfactory. I refer to the grades held by the clerks in charge of post offices, whom we might better call postmasters because I think the term is known to us all. In order to arrive at this study I took two of Canada's major cities—I was going to say Canada's two major cities, but perhaps I should not—Montreal and Toronto. For each one of the post offices in each of these cities I inquired as to the grade of the clerk in charge, the revenue of the post office and the number of employees. One would expect that the situation would be somewhat similar in these two cities. Incidentally, I may say for the benefit of those who are not familiar with the matter that the grades go upward. In other words, grade 2 is lower than grade 3 both as to salary and status.

In Montreal we find that out of 28 postmasters 24 are grade 2. In Toronto we find that out of 17 postmasters only two are grade 2 and 14 are grade 3. That indicates rather conclusively that, for whatever reason, the great bulk of the postmasters in Montreal are grade 2 and the great bulk in Toronto are grade 3.

We find that there is no relationship between the revenue of the office and the grade of the postmaster. To take a couple of cases at random, there is one post office in Montreal with a revenue of between \$500,000 and \$1 million. The postmaster is a grade 2. The