

Supply—Post Office

indication that the department has been able to overcome some of the disadvantages which were brought to our attention immediately the change was made from two deliveries to one delivery. We are not contemplating any change in the one delivery system at the present time but, as I indicated above, we have not ruled out the possibility of reinstating two deliveries when conditions are favourable.

At this point I might mention that to re-establish two deliveries under present circumstances would involve an additional expenditure of over \$3 million yearly.

Mr. Fraser: Owing to the fact that there is only one delivery a day, the post office is losing money. I know of cases where mail is coming from Montreal to Peterborough via express. It was never carried that way before. Mail is passing between other towns and villages via express instead of postal delivery so the people to whom the mail is addressed will receive immediate delivery instead of having to wait until the next day.

Mr. Cote (St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville): It is possible, in some classes of mail, that we have had to meet some new competition. I believe that over all we really did economize only to a reasonable amount. Last year our revenues were \$122,266,674, compared with \$105,533,994 for the year before.

Mr. Coldwell: I have a point connected with economy. The department has been economizing, and the member for Peterborough West has raised one phase of that economy which has been irritating some people. I believe the department is entirely overlooking the inconveniences that are caused in many country places by the economies that have been put into effect in the rural areas. I know of cases where postmasters in the small places, who are putting in what happens to be almost a full day and providing the premises, are getting as little as \$85 or less a month. That however, is not the point I intended to make.

I have before me a complaint from one of my constituents that a small office in the province of Saskatchewan—I might as well name it, the hamlet of Surbiton—has had a change of status. This is a farming area, a good community, but where unfortunately for me so far as the territorial extent of my constituency goes the farms have been largely consolidated and the population has become depleted in the past two or three decades. Last January the status of this office was changed from an accounting office to a non-accounting office, and that curtails the service automatically.

In the non-accounting offices the postmaster cannot issue money orders for more than \$15,

and so far as postal notes are concerned he is restricted as to numbers and denomination, etc. Such an office is not allowed to issue radio licences. In those areas the greatest inconvenience is caused to patrons of the post office during the winter months of the year when it is difficult to go long distances by automobile. In that period, as in other periods, if a person wishes to send a mail order or remit money through the post office in an amount exceeding \$15 he has to ask the postmaster at the local post office to send to an accounting office for the money order. It may be that there are only one, two or three trains a week, and consequently you can understand the tremendous inconvenience that is caused under the circumstances.

I believe the department does not really understand the extent of the inconvenience in the rural districts of provinces that are somewhat sparsely settled like the province of Saskatchewan where, as I say, you have consolidated farms and great distances between farms. Many of these people are quite well to do, particularly in the area I am discussing. At times they are unable to get to an accounting office, and so are unable to get a postal note or money order for more than \$15 in order to get supplies they need from the cities of Saskatoon, Regina or some other place.

I am bringing this to the attention of the postmaster, because I believe this is a false economy. It is always false economy when lack of service of this description causes great inconvenience to post office patrons. After all, the post office is, to a large extent, a public service. We know it sometimes operates at a deficit, but those who live in the cities have all the conveniences and are asking, as the hon. member for Peterborough West did, for more conveniences. I say some consideration should be given to the people who live in the rural areas and are obliged to do their business at these non-accounting offices.

Mr. Cote (St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville): I may say to my hon. friend that it all depends on circumstances and the demand in the locality. When we are asked to give authority to issue money orders in large amounts, we investigate each case and accordingly grant the authority to write money orders for greater amounts where the circumstances justify, and the postmaster is competent to undertake the accounting.

Mr. Coldwell: I am going to ask the minister to investigate this particular case at Surbiton.

Mr. Cote (St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville): I shall be pleased to do so.