

Postal Service Policies

painful justification of that description. After, when the minister gets to his feet, when he finishes calling me names—he has a wonderful catalogue but I do not have a research staff, so cannot do that—no doubt he will don the mantle of the great reformer. The names I think of I would not use because I am a polite man, so I do not get into that field. The minister is better at tossing semantic star dust in people's eyes than running a department. After all this, he will doubtless point to the years of neglect before his vigorous initiatives and innovations were visited upon the unsuspecting Canadian people and their employees of the postal service.

He has often referred to those ancient pre-Kiernsian days and scorned those who failed to alter things. In the process of course, he chooses to ignore the years of the Postmaster Generalship of the Honourable William Hamilton when many reforms were inaugurated. Perhaps judging by the present minister's record he regards as reforms only those changes which are disruptive, traumatic and counter productive. Perhaps he is the kind of man who is an administrative Hercules, who looks upon his department as a many headed Hydra and he, with his vigour, must go and lop off these various heads. He started this very, very early in the game. He lopped off one day of mail service. That was a simple thing to do—six to five—but the cut was a bit jagged there because he had to restore it to the rural people. Now, some have six, some have five and some have three, but there has been no differentiation in the price of stamps.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): It is lousy at the best.

Mr. Macquarrie: Then again, he lopped off a couple of thousand or 1,500 rural Post Offices. In case the people were getting too many Canadian ideas he lopped off a few newspapers, a few publications, a few journals of thought and opinion through his prohibitive rates. One of his final efforts—I think he had a little help in this lopping off—was against the unfortunate drivers of the Lapalme trucks. They got lopped off, too.

So our mighty Hercules has been lopping off, lopping off. I wonder what he had in mind? Was it a Freudian slip when he said a year ago, after one of his greater mistakes, "if this happens again heads will roll, mine among them." So, my concern about decapitation is stimulated by this remark. It is not so much my concern about his head as concern about the department which he, alas, heads.

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

There are unique aspects of the present regime. Never has so much studying been done by so many for so long. Is it three-quarters of a million that has been spent—is it a million? I am not sure. There must be a massive library of studies on this one department. Inefficient his department may be, but surely it is a studied inefficiency.

How old fashioned were these inefficient predecessors of the present minister? Under their dull, stale administration things were so routine, so bread and butter. The mails went through and a nickel could buy a stamp. In the mail of the Members of Parliament the biggest pile was not a bunch of complaints about the mail itself. How long ago all this seems.

If one reads Bullock's "Selected Readings in Public Finance" one comes across an interesting paragraph which should appeal to a lineal descendant of a Liberal, stating:

The best-established and in many cases the oldest form of public industry is the postal service, which Adam Smith described as "the only mercantile project which has been successfully managed—by every sort of government."

It was reasonably so until lately. So powerful is this man that he can even make Adam Smith look a bit goggle-eyed and prove him wrong. How remote and unreal those days of his predecessors seem. How many days in the past two or three months have we been without protest about the postal service? How many Canadians in that period have not been unhelpfully affected by the actions of this department—increased costs, decreased services, wholesale closing of rural post offices, embargo this day, cessation the next and uncertainty all the time. It is a long and dreary chapter of stubborn ineptitude, bull-headedness and unwillingness to learn from any mistake no matter how egregious.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macquarrie: How many more castigations, such as that of Mr. Martin, how many more criticisms such as that of Commissioner Goldberg, must we have before there is recognition that there is something terribly wrong in the way the Post Office Department is being conducted and administered?

In our concern for the present problem and our anxiety over a national strike, we must not lose sight of the fact that this is but a culmination of events which have been moving from bad to worse and to worse still, ever since this minister assumed the port-