

Postal Service Policies

participation of each and every member of the Post Office. We have to earn the trust and confidence of the people in the Post Office Department who have been left alone for far too long. We have to ask them to help us, and I hope I can ask my colleagues in this House to help us shape the future of the Post Office.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Mr. Ambrose Hubert Peddle (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador): Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my wholehearted and unreserved support for the motion placed before the House by my colleague, the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). It is rather a damning motion, but the unfortunate truth of the matter is that the motion, in my opinion, is a statement of fact. Not too long ago Canadians took pride in the excellent quality of our postal service. This is no longer the case. One would not have thought it possible for one to have accomplished what this Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) has accomplished during his two years in office. Never during the 100 years of Confederation has such a chaotic mess been created by so few to the detriment of so many. It is indeed a record, but not one that the bards will sing about with happiness in the years to come.

The motion before us is very broad. It sadly brings to mind the fact that few segments of our society which once had an excellent postal system have escaped the mark of the present minister. During my remarks I should like to deal with the portion of the postal service which directly affects the area of Canada I have the honour to represent in this House. I should like to bring to the minister's mind a few thoughts concerning the impact of his postal policy on the lives of the people of Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador—indeed, on the lives of all the people of the newest province, Newfoundland, and Labrador.

Geographically, my constituency is almost entirely rural. I am sure hon. members are aware of this. Our province's coastline is rugged and raw. Our people are spread out in hundreds of small communities scattered along the coastline and at various points in the interior. It is a remote country. There is no Montreal, no Toronto or Vancouver handy. In most places there are not a number of radio and television stations to choose from in order to keep in contact with the rest of the world. Only been recently have many of our communities been able to have what everybody else in Canada regards as certainly not a luxury—a simple telephone. Many com-

munities are still waiting for this basic service.

We have had to rely on whatever means of communication has been available to us. The contact of many thousands of Newfoundlanders with other parts of Canada and the world has always been through their post offices. However, over the decades their post offices have come to mean more to them than simply the place they go to receive a letter from a son, daughter, brother or sister who has left home to seek his or her fortune elsewhere. Their post offices have come to mean more than just the place they go to pick up a newspaper, a magazine or even Eaton's catalogue. For many of them the post office is the only source of communication with the world beyond their doorstep. Their post offices, however, have come to mean more to them than that. Over the years their post offices have been their daily meeting place, the place where the man who works alone, be it in the woods, in the fields or at sea, has a chance to chat with his neighbour. Over the years the post office has filled a social need within their community: it has become a catalyst bringing men together to talk, exchange ideas and understand one another.

Of course, the Postmaster General does not understand this. It is something which unless one has lived in a rural community, especially an isolated one like many in Newfoundland, one cannot truly comprehend and understand. When we first learned of the government's intention to start closing down rural post offices we were shocked. How can a government which talked about creating a just society take away from us the one government service we have always valued most? I have lived all my life in Newfoundland. I know how important a post office can be. Perhaps, had I been born and brought up in Montreal I would not understand this. Perhaps, had I studied at McGill and been president of the stock exchange, a humble rural post office would not mean much to me. Perhaps, had I lived in Westmount and had a television set and several stations to watch, not to mention radio and movie theatres, live theatres, libraries, museums, department stores, shopping centres and universities to go to, I would not think a post office in a far-off place like Cape Onion, Smith's Harbour, Quirpon or Beachside was very important.

Perhaps we have been unfair to a minister who has never really known what it is to rise at four o'clock in the morning, be on the job at five o'clock and spend several hours, perhaps