

Supply—Post Office

I want to express the appreciation of the residents of the east shore of the Kootenay lakes to the minister for the recently installed rural mail service, which means a great deal to these people living some distance from one another. I also wish to thank him for certain improvements to building in the district, and for improvements in the service of rural mail delivery at other places. I also want to express my appreciation of the courtesy and promptness shown by the senior officials of the department and of the staff generally. I do hope that consideration is being given to doing more for the lower paid members of the staff and to the final institution of a satisfactory form of collective bargaining for these people who perform a varied service throughout the nation and who are so often overlooked. Many of us do not realize how these services are performed daily to make it possible for us to live the lives we do and enjoy the things we do.

I want to pay my tribute to the local postmasters and I may say I have had lots of experience with them. As a matter of fact one of the first times I ever got into trouble was 57 years ago when I contracted to deliver the mail bag to a steamer calling at a small port on the lakes, and I missed it. When I returned the postmaster said, "It won't matter anyway. We will put it on board next week." Conditions have changed somewhat since then.

I want to support the remarks made by the hon. member for Cariboo in respect to these local postmasters who have been retired. I have noticed a similar situation on occasion, and I urge the minister to give consideration to the question the hon. member brought to his attention.

Then there is the question of the mail couriers, particularly in the district I represent, where these couriers go 200 miles up mountainous roads under winter conditions. Every consideration should be given to making certain their contract prices are fair and reasonable. So far as I am concerned, I do not see any evidence of patronage in my constituency. As a matter of fact so far as a lot of post office work is concerned, and mail routes, it is difficult to get people to undertake the service, due to competition from higher paid employment. It is usually the local storekeeper or some other person seeking to supplement his income who takes on the service.

So far as rural mail carriers are concerned, could the minister give consideration to seeking every co-operation from the provincial
[Mr. Herridge.]

department of public works? I am not going to criticize the department of highways, but there are occasions when mail has to be carried over these rural routes for long distances, with considerable difficulty caused mainly by failure to plow roads or sand extremely steep grades around cliffs. I am sure this matter was discussed by senior officials of the department with respect to certain of these isolated rural routes and I have no doubt those responsible would be willing to co-operate, provided the situation is brought to their attention.

I also wish to tell the minister that in some instances in the employment of temporary or casual labour by these smaller post offices where three or four men are employed, veterans preference has not always been preserved. I know of a few cases where old veterans on war allowances would have been very pleased to have been given a few extra hours a week—often it does not amount to much more. Or perhaps it might apply to a veteran's widow. I suggest that the situation be watched.

As far as the staff is concerned, the only complaint I have had was brought to my attention in March of this year. Some of the staff of two post offices in my riding objected to what they called the seeing eye procedure overlooking their work. I think time studies were being conducted. I wrote to the minister and he gave what I thought was an excellent explanation of the circumstances. He said:

In order that you may be made aware of the policy regarding the role of methods and standards officers a brief outline of the main objectives of their functions are as follows.

(a) To provide a more efficient service to the public where there is reason to doubt that this is being accomplished.

(b) To provide a guide for post office management to determine staffing requirements having in mind the volumes of mail to be processed.

(c) To develop better work methods and to recommend the acquisition of adequate equipment used in the processing of mail.

The realization of these aims helps each supervisor to meet his responsibilities and improves the lot of the conscientious employee by bringing to him recognition of a job well done and making the job easier through better methods and equipment.

The program has been in existence for the past ten years and there has not been a single case where any full time employee has been laid off because of the program. This policy was firmly established at the outset and has been adhered to over the past years.

Then the letter goes on to say that these officers receive an extensive training and