

Postal Rates

class mail into a position where it can be delivered expeditiously and be guaranteed.

When the minister has achieved that, I think most members of the House and most people in this country who want guaranteed mail delivery will be very happy to have delivery shifted back to the Post Office and away from the little red courier service and Wells Fargo or whoever is travelling up and down the highway delivering that mail today. It is a challenge for the minister, and I am sure that the Canadian public will pay the price if the Post Office is able to provide the kind of delivery which people are asking for. We should not allow the Post Office to be substituted by a private mail system, as we have allowed in Canada under previous governments, if we do not have a solution to the problem of first class mail delivery in this country.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. member who just had the floor made a comment—and I did not want to interrupt while he was speaking—relating to whether I read the *North Bay Nugget*. I can advise him that I read the *North Bay Nugget* religiously, and I can vouch for the comments which the hon. member made relating to the use of private couriers by the government as related in that paper.

My comments were across the aisle to the Postmaster General (Mr. Fraser), challenging him to indicate that the comments made by the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) were not true.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): Order. At this time I must inform the House that if the minister speaks now he will close the debate.

Hon. John A. Fraser (Postmaster General and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I indicated earlier in the debate that I would deal directly with some questions raised by the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez). Before doing that, however, I want to thank all hon. members who took part in this debate and especially the new members, whom I want to compliment on their speeches, on how rapidly they have become accustomed to this House and on their contributions thus far. I also want to thank hon. members for the expressions of good will which I have received.

The problems in the Post Office are well known to all of us. They did not occur yesterday, they occurred from decisions taken some years back. It is my own estimate that in terms of recovery probably the corner was turned in a better direction about two years ago. But we have a long way to go yet. As Postmaster General I intend to be a champion for the people in the Post Office. There are 63,000 Canadians who are trying very hard to do their duty for the Post Office, and the vast majority of them have not had any commendation for a number of years now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fraser: The general assumption is that somehow the problems in the Post Office are there because the people

[Mr. Peters.]

working in the Post Office want them to be there. That is not true.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fraser: I know that hon. members will remember that in our desire to improve the postal service there are 63,000 decent Canadians trying to do their very best. It is my intention to try to give them as much help as I can, and in that way serve the public interest.

I want to speak very briefly on a couple of points raised by my friend, the hon. member for Nickel Belt. I want to make it completely clear that I have no intention of bringing in a Crown corporation bill that removes the right to strike for workers who presently have that right to strike and are organized labour in this country.

● (1650)

I want also to tell the hon. member that I have no intention of taking the present Post office and hacking it up, taking its profitable parts and abandoning the essential service that the Post Office gives as a great Canadian institution.

I want also to say to the hon. member with respect to the grievances that he mentioned that the matter has been addressed although not resolved. The number of grievances is now much lower than the hon. member mentioned. I will be meeting with one of the union officials on Tuesday to discuss it further. I have already had discussions on that. I have had meetings with leaders of the unions and on November 7, under the aegis of the Canadian Labour Congress, there will be the first serious negotiating meetings for the structure of the Crown corporation. It is my hope that the bill we will present after those discussions have taken place will be more acceptable to both management and unions in the Post Office and I hope to this House, than was the previous bill.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fraser: The hon. member for Nickel Belt made reference to bargaining in something other than good faith. I do not want to go into the past but I want to indicate that it is my determination that there be bargaining in good faith. As long as I am Postmaster General and can elicit any control whatsoever, that bargaining will be in good faith.

I want to indicate to the hon. member—and some hon. members who were in the House the other day know this—that because this would be the last contract for most of the unions under the Public Service Staff Relations Act, I have offered to the unions a short contract of one year under that act. This would deal with a minimum number of matters and leave the substantive matters aside to be dealt with after the Crown corporation is created and they can bargain under the Canada Labour Code.

I have gone further, Mr. Speaker. If they want a shorter contract of six months, I am prepared to bring legislation into the House which would amend the Public Service Staff Relations Act for the specific purpose of giving them that short