

Post Office

I know, through a personal experience, that a letter from Gaspé to Sherbrooke is delayed three or four days if it is dispatched to the Montreal Post Office for sorting. This is why, Mr. Speaker, I recommend that the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) open distribution offices outside the larger centers, in order to accelerate the sorting of the mail from rural areas. The sampling method I used has established that delays in mail delivery occur only in the larger centers.

As to the sharply increased postal rates, I must say that paying \$0.08 to send a letter, let us say, from Gaspé to Vancouver via airmail is not too much. Thanks to the means of transportation available today, a letter can be delivered from Montreal to Vancouver in only eight hours. I am amazed at the idea that a mere \$0.08 stamp can send a letter so quickly and over such a distance, which is the result of the establishment of a domestic service called "All-Up". Canada is the first country ever to offer such a service to its citizens.

Today, the Canadian Post Office has everything it needs to operate at the accelerated pace of life in a modern world. While, thanks to modern techniques and science our geographical boundaries are disappearing and we find ourselves at the crossroads in our history. Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) and his department are meeting the challenges of the 1970's. Never in the history of the Post Office Department, have so many innovations been made over such a short time.

I think that, to a very large extent, the challenge which the Post Office will have to meet will be in the field of marketing. Our Post Office Department will have to offer services and products approved by their customers and from which we will benefit. Those customers should be treated with efficiency; they should be told how the Post Office will meet their needs which, in an increasingly competitive climate, are becoming more and more important. I know that the Postmaster General and his department are doing their best to achieve this objective.

All the postal administrations in the world are faced with price increases. The Canadian postal service is trying to overcome this problem through realistic planning while trying to meet the ever increasing requirements from its staff.

It goes without saying that uprating requires heavy investments. The request for new services from the postal service's customers should be met but we should never forget that a one-cent increase for a first class letter creates general protests throughout the country.

In closing, I wish to commend the Postmaster General for his good work and tell him that we encourage him to keep it up.

● (1550)

[English]

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak on this motion moved by my hon. friend from Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale). It gives me an opportunity to tell the government that my constituents are fed up with excuses, maladministration and mismanagement. They want, and have a right to expect, the kind of postal service they had become accus-

[Mr. Cyr.]

tomed to until the present government took over the operation of the Post Office Department.

There was a time when the Canadian postal service was one of the most efficient in the world. That time is not too far in the past. Now we have a postal service which is so badly administered that it has become the object of jokes, cartoons and outright ridicule. It is easy to make up jokes about how long it takes to have a letter delivered in Canada today, but it is no joke to people who depend on the mail to conduct their business. It is not a joke to those who rely on the mail to keep in touch with friends and loved ones. We all pay dearly for the postal service, and if there is any good reason why we cannot expect to receive dependable mail service in Canada it is time we were told that reason. It is also time we were told what we must do in order to get the kind of mail service we enjoyed in the past.

I am sure in my own mind that these are serious problems in the operation of the Post Office Department. Everyone is sure we have problems—everyone, that is, except the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet). He appears to be more concerned about the possibility that the Conservative Party will form the government in the near future than he is about running the Post Office Department. That is not new, however, Mr. Speaker; the last three postmasters general have had more pressing things on their minds than their portfolios.

The present Postmaster General spends his time condemning our ties with royalty and accusing the Conservative Party of being anti-French Canadian. If his remarks were effective in clearing up the problems in the Post Office Department, we would be willing to accept them. However, he only succeeds in bringing to mind a former postmaster general, Eric Kierans, who spent his time trying to run the finance portfolio while the Post Office Department fell into disrepair and disrepute.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of operating the Post Office in the fiscal year 1970-71 was \$343,837,000. The projected cost for the fiscal year 1973-74 is \$573,263,000. We are getting close to doubling the cost involved in operating the department in just three years, and during that period our postal services have continued to deteriorate. Everyone in this House and, indeed, everyone in Canada is aware that postal rates have almost doubled since the present government has been in power. The Canadian people have accepted this increase as the cost of getting service, just as they have had to accept increased costs in every other area of government operation. But while they accept the reasons for increased postal rates, they certainly do not accept greatly reduced service from the Post Office Department.

In spite of these greatly increased postal rates and the elimination of certain types of cheap, bulk-rate postal services the Post Office operates at a considerable deficit year in and year out. This House has not been unduly harsh with the government or the Postmaster General for not being able to operate the department without a large deficit. However, when at the same time we are afflicted by one of the world's least efficient postal services, when we find a serious morale problem among employees in the department, and when we are obliged to suffer total stoppage of mail service every year because there is a serious