

this matter and I hope I can bring the situation into focus in the remarks I make this evening.

There have been increased costs and a radical decline in the postal service. Rural post offices have been closed and the six-day delivery service has been reduced to a five-day service. Charitable organizations have been penalized by exorbitant increases in rates resulting in loss of business. Of course, there has also been the inevitable loss of morale among the employees. This has all meant a loss of revenue and mounting deficits with which this House is familiar.

• (2200)

I have even noticed that there has been a decline in the quality of the postal stamps issued recently. A correspondent has written, asking that I raise this subject in the House of Commons—perhaps this is the best opportunity afforded—suggesting that the Postmaster General (Mr. Côté) review the membership of the stamp design committee and its cost to the taxpayer as a possible method of decreasing the deficit. The amazing thing is that the Postmaster General recognizes this situation exists because in a recent speech in Vancouver he said, among other things, the following:

The Post Office productivity has fallen by 12.5 per cent since 1965.

He also said:

—to reduce the deficit new measures were adopted including the closing of rural post offices and the reduction in the delivery week from six days to five.

He said, further, that although these steps reduced the operating costs it is possible that they also led to the deterioration of postal service. I think we all agree that he can say that again. He said further:

Several steps are being taken to improve productivity including more consultation between employees and management in connection with new working methods, a better working environment and improved social conditions.

I asked a question today concerning the current negotiations with postal unions, because the results of these negotiations do not bear out the words of the Postmaster General to the effect that a great effort is being made to ensure closer consultation between employees and management. The contract expired a month ago. We have had no statement in the House from either the Postmaster General or the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) as to what progress is being made.

It is interesting that the only public utterance on this matter has come from the president of the Letter Carrier's Union in the wake of the speech that was made in Vancouver when the president, Mr. Roger Décarie, said that the minister had better follow more closely the work of his representatives at the bargaining table than let go with all kinds of statements on matters which could influence to a great extent the content of the next collective agreement.

Obviously, positive leadership is needed in the Post Office Department. The Postmaster General spoke about the problems and now there must be action—and not just the kind of action that was referred to in the speech in which he said:

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If we are unable to resolve this problem, we might have to reintroduce a Saturday delivery should that be the best solution.

There are many probables in that quotation such as “we might have to introduce the Saturday delivery should that be the best solution”. Obviously, the long suffering public of Canada has come to the conclusion that action is needed now. We trust that the Postmaster General will seize the initiative in these matters and will take some concerted and positive action with regard to the negotiations going on, so that we might have a contract and also do the things that are necessary, including the restoration of the six-day delivery, in order that the efficiency of the Post Office might be restored to its former level.

Mr. Gerald Richard Cobbe (Parliamentary Secretary to Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I assumed that the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) would be referring to the question he put on the “late show” with regard to the initiation of postage stamps to recognize our aquatic sports. We received representations in February of this year to recognize aquatic sports by the issuance of a postage stamp. The outstanding record of Canada's athletes in aquatic sports at the international level is very well known, as are the superb facilities of the Pan-Am pool in Winnipeg which hosted the international diving competition on April 8 and 9 this year.

We will certainly give sympathetic consideration to this suggestion when planning future programs. I should note, however, that we review 200 to 300 excellent suggestions each year which must be reduced to ten or twelve for the number of commemorative stamps issued each year. Many must be rejected or deferred for consideration as future programs. It should also be appreciated that about one year is required for design, printing and distribution after a subject is selected and approved.

Our department has consistently given sport good recognition. Hon. members may recall the four outdoor recreation issues of 1957 which, incidentally, portrayed swimming as well as skiing, canoeing and hunting. We have also honoured curling and lacrosse, the Canada summer and winter games, hockey, the Pan-Am games and recently the world figure skating championships in Calgary.

Sport is becoming an increasing part of our culture. All Canadians should become more aware of the values of sport and recreation. We are continuing our study of the possibilities for making contributions through our postage stamp programs.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—POSSIBLE OPENING OF MISSIONS IN ZAMBIA AND BARBADOS

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, when on March 20 I asked the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) when it was intended to open a Canadian diplomatic mission in Zambia and Barbados, I was repeating an inquiry which I have been making for to these many months.

I have long been troubled and a bit ashamed that the small country of Barbados could establish in our capital a mission with three very fine external affairs officers, but that this the senior overseas member of the Common-