

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

standards, is the minister planning a further overhaul to correct the mess that exists in many places?

The minister replied:

I did not quite understand the first part of the question.

This is not an unusual occurrence with respect to the minister in charge of the Post Office, so I asked this further question:

Is the minister not aware that there are many cases in Canada, such as some in Saskatchewan which have come to my attention, where mail that formerly travelled 109 miles in two days to reach its destination from a major centre now has to travel almost 350 miles and takes six days?

Mr. Speaker, the occasion for this question was a letter I received from a resident of Raymore, Saskatchewan. Some of the people who get their mail in Raymore live in Regina East. The letter reads:

● (10:00 p.m.)

We are on rural route mail delivery twice a week, Tuesdays and Fridays.

We used to get the *Western Producer* on Fridays. Since they changed the mail route from Saskatoon we don't get our mail till Tuesday.

Why are all the detours? Saskatoon is around 100 miles from Raymore. The way the mail travels, it is around 400 miles.

Can't we get a better mail service?

Then the letter reads:

This is what we call a poor service, getting week-old news.

The sender of that letter included in the envelope a letter he had received from the circulation department of the *Western Producer* dated March 30, 1971. It reads in part:

With reference to your recent letter, please be advised that the *Western Producer* for your area goes out each Wednesday but on occasion it may go out on Thursday morning. In checking in the mailing room we find that since the mail now has to go to Regina, then to Melville then to Raymore, this would explain the reason for the delay.

Let us look at the picture. Raymore is approximately 109 miles southeast of Saskatoon. From Saskatoon to Regina the mail travels 161 miles, but at Regina it is only 74 miles from Raymore. It travels from Regina to Melville, another 93 miles, so that it is then 90 miles from its final destination, Raymore. Finally, it makes its last journey of 90 miles and arrives in Raymore after having travelled 340 miles.

I could cite many other examples. One came to my attention within the last couple of weeks. A lady in Ottawa had sent a letter to her mother in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. It was mailed early on Wednesday afternoon, April 7, and arrived in Regina on April 8, as is evident from the postmark. The mother received the special delivery letter in her mail-box on Easter Monday, April 12, five days later. I remember that 25 years ago we had a one-day service from eastern Canada to Saskatchewan for regular, first-class mail.

The Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Lang), who represents the constituency of Saskatoon-Humboldt, ought to be familiar with this further exam-

[Mr. Burton.]

ple. The village of Lake Lenore is located approximately 20 miles northeast of Humboldt, which in turn is 70 miles straight east of Saskatoon. Instead of there being a direct service between Lake Lenore and Humboldt, mail from Lake Lenore now travels to Saskatoon, almost 100 miles, and then 70 miles back to Humboldt. Certainly this is no improvement and it is not an efficient operation.

These new routings may speed up some mail services but they seriously hurt rural mail service and service to small centres. The post office is a vital institution in rural communities and it is important today in terms of service in respect of modern agricultural requirements. There are concerns about the future of rural Canada. The process of disintegration of communities and of rural life is evidenced in many parts of Canada.

Hundreds of post offices have been closed in the past couple of years. The hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) earlier tonight recalled that the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, the member for Saskatoon-Humboldt, interfered with respect to a post office on the border of Regina East and Regina-Lake Centre. This was the post office at Serath. The minister passed on the message, acting as a messenger boy, that some people who would like to see the Esk post office kept open but wanted the Serath post office closed. I suggested, without contradiction, that those people were the Last Mountain Liberal executive, the local Liberal executive in that area of Saskatchewan.

I think this matter is too serious to be passed over lightly. I know that probably the reply will point out that there have been improvements in mail service as a result of new groupings. With that I probably cannot argue. However, I suggest that there have been other detrimental effects as a result of new programs introduced by the Post Office, such as these routings, closure of post offices, reductions in service, and so on. These are hurting rural life in Canada and in the process are hurting Canada as a nation.

Mr. Martin P. O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Minister without Portfolio, in charge of the Post Office (Mr. Côté) who is unable to be present this evening. The hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Burton) has drawn our attention to certain delays in mail deliveries in Saskatchewan. He described the circuitous route followed by some mail. The principal source of the problem in southeastern Saskatchewan, for example, arises from existing trucking schedules in relation to the changed receipt time for incoming mail, which has been caused in turn by changes in railway services.

I assure the hon. member that in this particular situation, as in other, similar situations, a solution is under consideration. This solution will involve an extensive change in truck routing and schedules, one which we trust will not unfavourably affect other locations in the general area. These changes will be implemented as soon as a balanced trucking network is established in conjunction with the assured mail program due to start early in August.