

Postal Service

We accept it for today and we agree to it, but with that understanding.

Mr. Aiken: Can the house leader indicate what legislation will follow the official languages bill?

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that following the official languages bill we will proceed with the housing legislation. Is it understood that my proposal with respect to the time of speeches is now accepted by the house?

Mr. Speaker: Is it so agreed and ordered by the house?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTED DAY, S.O. 58—NON-CONFIDENCE MOTION—GOVERNMENT MISMANAGEMENT CAUSING DETERIORATION IN POSTAL SERVICE

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough) moved:

This house regrets that this government's mismanagement of the postal service imposes on the country a steadily deteriorating service at higher cost to the public and contributes to a declining morale among the postal workers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, regarding the time limit for speeches, while the minister may need more than 20 minutes to defend his department's record, no overtime is needed for those who criticize it. One has only to read the press, hear the protests of patrons or read one's mail to know that the postal service, more expensive than ever before, is also less efficient. If there is in this chamber any member who has not had a letter of complaint about poor mail service, I am confident the reason for his unique position is that the letter or letters have not yet been delivered. There is hardly a newspaper which has not deplored and denounced the service offered Canadians by one of the most important utilities in the land.

The gentlest comment I can find is in the *Ottawa Journal* of March 5, 1969, in Richard Jackson's column:

A great deal of mail is not being delivered on time.

Of course, Mr. Jackson was quoting the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) himself. On May 12 the *Montreal Gazette* declared:

There has been a limit to how long Canadians and Canadian businesses could put up with the [Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

sort of Post Office service they have been receiving. That limit has been reached. While many have complained, they have been hoping that the dislocation, the delays and the losses of mail were somehow temporary. But bad service has by now settled down into a bad pattern. It has become the expected thing. And this is not tolerable in a modern industrial nation.

It is not just good enough to charge more for mail service than ever before and then to provide the worst service the public has ever known.

The *Winnipeg Free Press*, the Liberal tribune of the prairies, in an editorial headed "Scandalous Service" declared:

Since Mr. Kierans' reforms it is almost impossible to send a letter within Canada's main centres and have it delivered the same day. Where periodicals are concerned it's nothing but disaster

Indeed, Charles Lynch, senior savant of the Southam News Service, calls the Postmaster General "The Minister of Disaster" and, rugged royalist though he be, Lynch brings himself to confess: "I have no faith whatever in what used to be called Her Majesty's mail".

The press offer some solutions. One suggests we write fewer letters and thus hedge our disappointments. Charles King thinks it might be worth paying 10 cents and hopes that with the extra surtax we might get back to the former service. But the most clearcut recipe for improvements is that of the *Oshawa Times*: "Kierans Time is Up. He Should Go." Who am I to quarrel with the *Oshawa Times*? With friends like these the minister scarcely needs an opposition!

We all know, Mr. Speaker, that postal service has sadly deteriorated. The past ten months have seen the sad chronicle of one major strike, partial strikes, near strikes, disruption, lowered morale. Indeed, everything is low but the costs. Instead of five cent mail for six day service, most Canadians get five day service for six cent stamps.

When the minister raised the local rates by 50 per cent to six cents instead of four cents per letter, I wondered about the logic of this action. It seemed strange that one should pay as much to get mail from one end of town to another as from one side of the continent to the other. But I discounted the minister's logic. There was a rational justification. It was simply that it often takes as long to get a letter across town as across Canada, and thus we have equalization of service justifying equalization of cost. I suppose in this process of justification he is doing his bit for the just society.