

Supply—Post Office

had against the Post Office Department since I have been here. I would like to bring this up now in the hope that this last appeal may soften the minister's heart a bit in relation to this case. I am told that in the province of Ontario there are six or seven elderly ladies in the same position as the one whose case I am going to bring before the committee at this time. These elderly ladies are not civil servants, unfortunately, but they have held positions in post offices throughout the province where they sold stamps on a commission basis.

The lady I am going to deal with is a Miss Katherine Rose, who held such a position in the post office in Woodstock. I understand there is also one in Brantford and others in certain other places. These ladies unfortunately do not come under the civil service; consequently when they are compelled to give up their positions they have no pensions or any other type of remuneration coming to them other than the old age pension.

Miss Katherine Rose sold stamps on a concession basis in the Woodstock post office for 33 years. Last fall Miss Rose, who is approximately 80 years of age and continued to sell stamps despite her age, was discharged from the post office. I understand there were adequate reasons for discharging Miss Rose because of her age and so on; however, the one rather unfortunate aspect was that after 33 years of service she was told on September 21 that she was going to be discharged on September 30, which I think is rather short notice and somewhat abrupt, in fact one might almost say a little cold blooded.

Miss Rose, however, was fired, and now of course she has no revenue except the old age pension; because Woodstock had a population of approximately 10,000 during the period in which Miss Rose was employed, although it is a little larger now, and in a city of that size there would not be vast sales of stamps and I understand vendors receive a 2 per cent commission.

Miss Rose, as I said, is approximately 80 years of age, and according to the law of averages she probably will not live a great deal longer. I understand there are certain other ladies in the same predicament in this province, and now that we are approaching virtually a welfare state in Canada I think it is a great pity that these six or seven elderly ladies, none of whom will live very long, in all probability, could not receive some recompense from the government for their services over these many years.

It is indeed unfortunate that they are not under the civil service, but they are not; and I think it would be a very simple matter for the minister to include in his estimates or

his supplementary estimates a little item reading, "Pension for so and so". We see it all through the estimates; we saw it this afternoon when we were dealing with the estimates of the Department of Justice. There is a small pension item for three ladies in those estimates and I presume it covers some unusual circumstances such as these. I am sure it will not bankrupt the country nor will it endanger the enormous surpluses of the Minister of Finance if the government should find it possible to give \$600 a year to each of these six or seven ladies who served the Post Office Department. Such arrangements have been made in other departments, and I do not see why it could not be done here.

In addition to that, in our town we had another elderly lady who worked for 60 years not in the post office but as a stenographer for the province of Ontario. Because of the length of time she worked and the nature of her employment she did not receive a pension when she was obliged to retire. However, the government of the province of Ontario saw fit to give this elderly lady, who had worked for 60 years in the service of the province, a special pension under the estimates, and I cannot see why the Postmaster General could not find a way of doing it in relation to the handful of elderly ladies I have mentioned.

I know the minister may very well say, "Oh, but Miss Rose worked until she was 80 years old, and for that reason she had an income and was better off than if she had retired on a pension." Mr. Chairman, that is no answer at all. It certainly is news to me that when people are obliged to work until they are 80 years of age in order to live it is to be preferred to a pension. This lady should have retired at the age of 65 or 70 like anyone else, instead of having to work until she was 80 and able to work no more. I cannot understand why the minister is unable to find some way of softening his heart a little to help out these few elderly ladies who are scattered throughout the province of Ontario.

Mr. McBain: Mr. Chairman, I have been asked by the rural mail carriers of my own riding of Elgin to bring to the attention of the minister a petition they circulated widely among their group, which is signed by some 39 of the 50 rural carriers in the county. I have already sent a copy of the petition to the minister. It reads as follows:

We, the undersigned mail carriers of Elgin county, in view of the high cost of owning and maintaining a suitable vehicle for the purpose of delivering mail to the rural sections, feel that a minimum remuneration of \$75 per contract mile per year is necessary to meet that high cost and leave a satisfactory amount for our labours.