

*Post Office Act*

post office bill out of the way, but in a satisfactory manner, and then get on with the agricultural bills which I submit should not have been delayed. I am sure there are segments of our society just as concerned about this bill as those of us from western Canada are concerned about the agricultural bills, and we would be remiss in our duty if we did not give this bill thorough consideration by referring it to a standing committee.

Speaking on the resolution stage of this bill, as recorded at page 928 of *Hansard* for October 8, the Postmaster General referred to a situation that I believe is completely correct. He suggested that Canada has one of the finest postal services in the world and added:

Nothing in my brief experience as Postmaster General would lead me to any different opinion—

I can concur with that 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker, and I believe every member of this house would concur if they could be certain that it would continue to be the finest postal system in the world.

The Postmaster General went on to pay tribute to the 48,000 men and women who operate the system and said their efforts are worthy of the thanks of every Canadian. I concur with that too. These 48,000 people have provided a service to this country second to none in the world. But if we allow this bill to be passed in its present form the service which the Canadian people have enjoyed as a way of life may deteriorate, and postal employees will no longer take pride in working for the postal division of the federal government.

Farther on in his speech the minister said:

It is evident, therefore, that action must be taken to restore a reasonable cost-revenue relationship, and to provide the funds necessary to ensure that our traditional standard of service will be maintained.

We all appreciate the fact that in this modern day there must be streamlining, but that streamlining should not lead to deterioration of service. Hon. members on the government side must accept full responsibility if they allow this bill to pass without agreeing to refer it to a standing committee where it can be intelligently examined as to its merits.

Our postal service has been good but recently it has deteriorated somewhat. I refer specifically to the sorting of mail as we knew it in the past. A news item in a recent issue of the *Moose Jaw Times-Herald* was headed, "Railway Arrival Of Mail Being Discontinued." Mail used to be sorted in Moose Jaw and distributed from that main centre. Now it

is being sent to a city 44 miles to the east and being distributed from there. I am sure hon. members realize that to amalgamate and consolidate all these services in a central location is not good so far as distribution is concerned. There is complete congestion at Regina, and if this is an attempt by the Postmaster General to establish a better system of distribution and sorting I must tell him I think it will be a complete failure.

We all know that there is much congestion at airports. Air travel sometimes takes much longer than train travel, especially with respect to the movement of products from one point to another. It is fine and dandy to say that we can get mail into the air and move it from coast to coast. I agree that to move mail by air from country to country is a logical method of transporting it but I do not agree that mail should be transported solely by air from coast to coast. I have often wondered whether the railways themselves wished to get out of their mail handling contracts or whether the government deliberately put them out of that business by taking those contracts away from them. I hope the Postmaster General will clarify this point when he replies.

• (5:40 p.m.)

I know that on days when the weather conditions are poor out west or any other place the movement of mail by air cannot compete with the movement of mail by rail as I have known it in the past. Once winter conditions arrive, distribution of mail by trucks in the western provinces—and I am sure this applies throughout the whole of Canada—slows down or the mail does not go through. We know that when the mail was handled by rail this was not the situation; the mail always went through. We also know of a situation last week in which it took five days for first class mail to travel from Moose Jaw to Ottawa. I should like the Postmaster General to ascertain whether he can speed up the delivery of first class mail because in the last few years, in my opinion, it has been slow compared with the days of the old stage coaches. I do not believe our method of transportation has improved very much in the last few years in particular.

I do know that in a statement the hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour (Mr. Perrault), that self-appointed leader of a block of members to the right, has made quite an issue of the so-called free enterprise system. The hon. member suggested it is time to put postal operations in Canada on a sound,