

*Post Office*

question period or by way of clarification during what is known as the late show. But this is the first opportunity I have had to speak as minister, and I want to take advantage of it to mention how often, through my visits across the country, I have had the occasion of realizing the devotion and the competence of all postal employees all over the country. I noted that dedication and competence at the national level here as well as in areas where thousands of Canadians work, often in difficult conditions, to ensure the best postal service possible to Canadians. And I am pleased to point out today in this first speech that in most cases, I have met and discussed with people who are proud to work with the Post Office Department, who are unhappy to find that often our operation is criticized in an irresponsible or irrational way and to find that, in many instances, the complexity and difficulty of such a postal service are not understood.

● (1430)

Mr. Speaker, I read as other members the resolution moved today by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) who charged the Post Office Department with such a multitude of sins of commission as well as omission that I could not help remembering that big hit movie "Play it again Sam".

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, that the charge made by the hon. member is nothing but another far-off echo of a series of charges made periodically by the Post Office Department itself for several years as everyone who is interested in Canada's postal service realizes that such an institution must absolutely be modernized. Indeed every postal administration of the world must face the same problems. The increase in mail volume, the facilities, the system itself that has become obsolete, the social disorders and the ever increasing deficits contribute to a reduction in the quality of service and bring criticism upon us.

But the important thing, Mr. Speaker, is that the Canadian Post Office has set out to work energetically in order to remedy this situation and is doing everything possible so Canadians can again enjoy a postal service which they can rightly be proud of.

We have two alternatives: on the one hand, the Post Office Department could refrain from bringing basic alterations to its organization. Then, the quality of its service to the public would deteriorate and its annual deficit would surely reach \$500 million at the beginning of the 80's. On the other hand, the department can set itself an aim which would surely not be easily achieved, whatever the line of action, and become a stable and modern organization providing to the Canadian people an essential service at reasonable cost while giving interesting work conditions for its employees.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that the Canadian postal service has chosen the second solution and that it is becoming, in spite of the comments of some members opposite, a modern and dynamic organization. Moreover, the list of changes anticipated for that purpose is as important and impressive as long. In its endeavour to provide more efficiency to the postal service, the department has dealt with the first-class mail, which accounts for more than half of the five billion pieces of mail handled each year in the country.

We first provided an assured mail program for first-class mail. The efficiency of this service, with regard to delivery the day following mailing has now reached 95 per cent; quite recently, I read, as every Canadian could have done, in a week-end newspaper, the findings of an independent investigation made by a Canadian newspaper which showed beyond any doubt the efficiency of the assured mail program, which efficiency is over 95 per cent.

I am pleased to announce to the House that, effective next Monday, the Assured Mail Delivery Service will include, in addition to the service already offered at the national and regional levels, a third and last category of service, that is, local delivery.

Therefore, this means that we are trying, through this Assured Mail Delivery Service, to give next-delivery-day service to everyone in about 60 Canadian centers. In order to enforce this Assured Mail, we have a quality control service program. This program provides us with all sorts of extremely interesting data. Yesterday, in reply to a question from an hon. member from Alberta, I spoke in the House about the service provided to the province of Alberta. Since this motion was presented by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale), an Alberta constituency—

**Some hon. Members:** He is not even here.

**Mr. Ouellet:** Some of my colleagues are saying that the hon. member is not in the House. This morning, while commenting those remarks, the hon. member for Brandon-Souris told us that a multitude of members opposite wanted to contribute to this debate. I would say that if postal service efficiency is proportional to the number of abstentions across the way, I am convinced that we have an excellent postal service.

I wanted to say that our assured postal service in Manitoba, represented by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris who introduced this motion, is as follows: Our domestic service, namely the letters to be delivered within our borders, has reached an efficiency level, for the period ending May 25,—and I would ask the hon. members to listen carefully—of 100 per cent; with regard to the regional service, the level is 99 per cent, and the local service, 98 per cent.

Obviously the department is taking numerous steps to improve this service. Of course, it is not perfect. Several hon. members can, I am sure, mention hundreds of delayed deliveries but I would ask each hon. member to recognize that, even if out of let us say, 100 letters mailed, one, two or three letters are late, that does not mean that our postal service is bad, since 97 pieces reached their destination on time. I wish our hon. friends of the opposition would realize that.

I would add that the department is preparing a set of standards applicable to third and fourth class mail for, admittedly, there is considerable need for improvement with regard to third and fourth class mails. We are now in the process of developing new standards and new techniques to improve this service.

Besides, the marketing branch of the department has developed a wide program of relations with our clients, in order to solve all those postal problems which can create