

*Supply—Post Office*

like to mention and I will do so very briefly. This concerns the railway mail clerks.

It has come to my attention recently that the jobs of the railway mail clerks are in some jeopardy due to the general change in the nature of mail transportation. There is a larger and larger amount of mail being carried by highway service. I really feel that the highway service cannot do the job the railway mail clerks can do. This is a very highly skilled group, and it seems to me it is the most suitable arrangement that mail should be sorted en route and dropped off at the various stations. It has, in the past, been an exceptionally good service.

Now, I know of two or three instances, and I have spoken to the minister about them, in which the railway mail clerks have been taken off in exchange for highway service. Highway mail services are let out to the man who offers the lowest tender. This idea is not a good substitute for trained railway mail clerks who have been carrying on this service for many years. I should like merely to take this opportunity to ask the minister to give consideration to sorting the mail wherever possible on the trains. I know there is a great deal of difficulty in this regard because of changing railway schedules, and the extensive shifting by railway companies in the types of service they are operating. I recognize that the Post Office Department has to follow along. I have seen several things, one of which relates to trains numbers 46 and 47 from Toronto, north, from which the railway mail clerks have been removed recently. I do not believe the service is as good.

This is all I want to say at the moment. I hope that this policy will not be continued because I think the highway service, which is carried in some cases in open transport and has to be sorted at some terminal point, is no substitute for the skilled job done by the railway mail clerks.

**Mr. Crouse:** Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to speak at any great length to delay the passage of the estimates of the Postmaster General. However, I do wish to congratulate him upon his appointment to his present position. In my opinion, there has been a marked improvement in the administration of his department since his appointment and this augurs well for the future.

I wish to speak very briefly on the small post offices construction program. Under the present minister's predecessor, the defeated Liberal candidate in my riding announced in the press the planned construction of seven

new post offices in my constituency. One of these was to be built at Blockhouse in Lunenburg county; one at Rose Bay in Lunenburg county; one at Petite Riviere Bridge in Lunenburg county; one at Barss' Corners in Lunenburg county; one at Mill Village in Queens county; one at Hunts Point in Queens county and one at South Brookfield in Queens county. What has happened to this program? The figures that were originally announced kept getting smaller and smaller and the excuses for lack of construction became even more vague.

I should like to ask the minister the reason for this change in plan, because to date none of the seven post offices announced have been constructed. Certainly, if the surveys showed that small modern post offices were required in those areas less than a year ago, there is still a need for improved facilities at the present time. Proposals had been made for small post offices in some of these areas prior to the change of administration and I like to think that the present government is concerned with providing an improvement in the facilities wherever necessary.

I am grateful for this opportunity to bring this matter to the minister's attention. I hope that this will result in the continuation in the near future of the building program that has been announced by his department.

**Mr. Nicholson:** I should like, first, to thank all the members who have participated in this debate, particularly for their kind references to me and to the department of which I have the honour to be the head. I can assure hon. members that their suggestions have been carefully noted and will be further studied. If I do not deal specifically with the points that they have raised here today in the limited time available, I will deal with them by a personal letter to each of the members.

I should like, however, to comment on one or two points made by the hon. member for Elgin. He remarked that it was unfortunate that the annual report of the Post Office Department for the year ending March 31, 1964 was not at hand. I can assure hon. members of the house that the reason resolution No. 12 was not proceeded with was that I realized very quickly it would be unfair to proceed with it until the report is in the hands of hon. members. We do hope it will be available within a few weeks, and not later than the first of September.

Then, in so far as stamps are concerned, I may say that we have some very interesting stamps on the horizon for next year as

[Mr. Aiken.]