

Postal Service

the provision of alternative employment for the employees of these small offices. The minister appears to take this whole matter quite lightly, but this matter is not taken lightly by those individuals who have lost their jobs. The loss of a part or the whole of one's income is a serious matter.

This situation is even more important because this action has been taken in areas where it is difficult for individuals to find alternative employment. The post office department has outlined certain criteria for the closing of post offices. The first is that a post office must not serve less than 30 families. If it serves less than 30 families it is not worth keeping open. That is a questionable criterion. Officials of the post office department fail to realize that these small communities are dependant to a great degree on post office services. These services are essential to these isolated areas. Transportation and communication in these areas are limited because of geographical location. The closing of a post office means increased isolation for these points.

Another criterion followed by the post office department is that if an office has an income of under \$1,000 per year it should be closed. This is nothing short of an absurdity. Post office services should be provided to serve Canadians. That is the only function of a post office. This department has never had any other function than to serve the people of Canada who pay for this service through taxation. It is ridiculous to suggest that a post office should make money. If this were the policy adopted by the government in all areas, no doubt the first thing the government would do—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired. Does the house give its unanimous consent to the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Speaker, I thank hon. members of the house for their kindness. I have only one or two more points to make. The post office service has for years supplied Canadians a means for communication. This service is being taken away in many instances with a complete disregard for the people in these communities and those employed by the department. I strongly protest against this policy on the basis of numerous representations made to me by individual employees concerned and other interested parties. The

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

government seems to forget that there is more to Canada than the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. I strongly urge the minister to reverse this policy decision which is, I might say, not only unfair but at times highly discriminatory.

• (8:40 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roland Godin (Porineuf): Mr. Speaker, even if I am a member of the opposition, I would like to say that the service of the Canadian Post Office is one of the best in the world, and that even ten months of mismanagement will not have been sufficient to make it as bad as the previous members have just said.

It is true that the service is, at this time, rather slow, but, in my opinion, that slowness is mostly due to the Air Canada strike. Before that happened, I had the opportunity to get to Vancouver. There, I posted a letter on a Sunday afternoon and it was delivered in Quebec City the following afternoon, or 24 hours later. It is simply wonderful.

It is obvious that we enjoy an excellent service. In big cities the mail is sorted rather well, and for a long time now the mail carriers have shown their honesty and their cooperation. In good or bad weather, those rural mail carriers deliver the mail and they never even get a holiday. In any case, they are generally so poorly paid that they do not even think of it.

As our time is restricted to 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker, I am unable to deal with some specific cases. However, I feel duty bound to pay tribute to those rural mail carriers who are awarded their contracts through out-of-date procedures. We must realize that the situation is not the present minister's doing, but is due to obsolete methods for the awarding of rural mail delivery contracts.

In view of increased responsibilities, the high cost of gasoline, insurance, car maintenance and the cost of living in general, I think the minister should conduct survey on this matter.

I now want to mention the closing of numerous post offices, something which should make us stop and think. Indeed, I believe the minister would close all the post offices of the country, if he could. I may exaggerate a bit, for I think he would spare a post office per capital, which is the least he could do.

We recall a statement of last winter to the effect that some post offices would be closed. I will repeat what the previous speaker said, it