

Adjournment Debate

17 cents apiece, it does not take a genius to pick lousy service for 14 cents.

The Postmaster General's answer to my question was to the effect that he did not know anything about that but that he wanted to reassure everybody that Ontario was now under the direct management of the Deputy Postmaster General and that everything would be just dandy. The only thing that I can think of which is worse than that would be that if he promised to take personal charge of the postal service in the province. There is no information in the minister's answer generally for Canadians about what is happening in the Post Office, but Canadians do know a few things about the Post Office.

Canadians know that over the last ten years and as of April 1 this year rates will have virtually tripled. They know that the deficit will not only have tripled once but tripled three times. It is virtually nine times higher than it was when this government came to office, a government which has given us eight Postmasters General. They know that the Crown corporation, a Conservative policy that was adopted by this government—but, as usual, they got the words right but not the music—is being tried and that it is falling to pieces because the government does not know how to put it into effect. The consultation with unions that was promised when they began to implement that policy has just not materialized. The unions themselves in recent days have been forced to advertise, telling the public that the kind of Crown corporation that is being proposed does not solve the difficulties which face the Post Office.

Canadians know something else. They know that change in a postal service is possible. All they have to do is look at the United Kingdom where there was a \$614 million deficit just four years ago in 1975. Three years later, last year, they made a \$734 million profit. Obviously, the British post office includes such things as telephones, telecommunications, a bank, and a data communications service. If one removes those departments, the British post office still made a profit last year of over \$80 million.

We are not suggesting that the government make a profit of \$80 million, or even eight cents. We would be happy if they just lost \$80 million instead of over \$500 million. That would make Canadians very happy. Their response to that kind of news about successes in Britain is to produce expensive memos and distribute them to everybody in the Post Office at the supervisory level and above. Here is a copy of one produced last year, "a calm team backgrounder" which consists of justifications for the lousy performance of the Post Office. That is their response; not a change, just a justification for incompetence.

We on this side of the House would like to hear any kind of an answer, any kind of sensible proposals aimed at reducing the bureaucracy and the cost, and which would improve the service and labour relations in that benighted department of a benighted government, the Post Office.

Mr. D. M. Collenette (Parliamentary Secretary to Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, in taking up the cue of the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Parker) who wants some sensible answers, he will get a sensible answer when he asks sensible

questions. I never sat through such a platitudinous, boring speech, full of clichés, as befits his former profession, and not based on fact. First of all, he was talking about the deficit. He should come to the transport committee and find out that the Post Office deficit is not \$500 million as is being spread by the Conservative party in this House, but will be about \$275 million next year. This will come out at a committee meeting if the hon. member ever gets there to ask a question.

● (2225)

I want to talk about the exact complaint of the hon. member. I am getting fed up, and I am sure the Postmaster General (Mr. Lamontagne) is fed up, coming into this House day after day listening to the complaints from members on the other side in the Conservative party who are trying to second guess hard-working men and women who are trying to operate the Post Office. If they want to talk about matters of policy let them talk about general financing for the Post Office and other kinds of labour relations. That is fine. I am sure the hon. member has a spy out at the Mississauga plant who sees 60 trucks lined up with mail and therefore says something is wrong and that the delay is one week, that people are not getting their mail.

If he had done his homework he would have found there is a good answer to that. He answered his own question. A lot of bulk mailers are trying to beat the mail increase that is coming into effect on April 1. The Post Office does gear to peak periods. It is like the Toronto Transit Commission. The hon. member is from Toronto and he should know something about gearing for peak periods. The Toronto Transit Commission does not have a full staff of bus drivers, train drivers and streetcar drivers around the clock. They gear to peak periods, and the Post Office does that. What is happening is that a lot of bulk handlers are trying to take advantage of the cheaper rates. That is normal. We are trying to come to grips with that particular problem. What happened is that the hon. member gets a tip off from some friend who works in the Gateway plant or some spy that he has out there, and then gives this as an example of the deteriorating mail system. Every day we have to come here and listen to this.

The majority of bulk mailers have agreed and complied with staggering hours for phasing things in, but some of them wanted to take advantage of the fact that the rates will be going up on April 1. That is the reason there were 60 trucks. I forget the figure the hon. member mentioned, but they were only there for 24 hours. The delay did not concern first class mail as implied by the hon. member's irascible question, but was second, third or fourth class items where a delay of 24 hours would be quite acceptable and quite within the norm. He has questioned the fact that the Postmaster General stated that 95 or—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his allotted time has expired. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.29 p.m.