

*Post Office Act*

one of our members suggested the other night that he was giving false facts to the house. I do not think the statement made by the hon. member on this side was intentional, and I do not think the officials of the minister's department are little tin gods. They can make mistakes the same as anyone else, and the place to find out is in a committee. So said the *Winnipeg Free Press* in an article published on October 20. It said that inasmuch as the government's proposed increases on second class mail do not take effect until 1969, there would appear to be plenty of time for study of this proposal by a parliamentary committee. Why not? Why all the rush?

• (3:10 p.m.)

**The Deputy Chairman:** Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member but I should like to point out to the hon. member and the members of the committee that the subject of referring the bill to a committee was settled by a vote of the house. I must ask the hon. member, therefore, to restrict his remarks to clause 1.

**Mr. McIntosh:** All right, Mr. Chairman, but I can still wonder. In respect of the closing of rural post offices I can only say that this shows a lack of understanding on the part of the officials of the department concerning rural needs. The formula which states that there now must be 30 families while a year ago it was 20 families does not take into consideration the needs of the people. I see that the previous postmaster general is giving advice to the present Postmaster General. The present Postmaster General will need more advice than that if he wishes the people to swallow what he intends to do.

I say that the present minister is a captive of his officials and a hostage of his department. The need for postal services in our rural areas is as great today as it is in the urban centres and possibly greater at the present time under the circumstances. The preceding speaker, my friend from northern Alberta, gave some indication of why it is essential that people in the rural areas receive their daily newspapers. Those who live on ranches are isolated. I believe that the officials have been very shortsighted in advancing this policy. On the prairies the people who reside in urban centres—we call them distribution centres but perhaps in the east they are called cities—are there mainly to service the rural areas or those engaged in agriculture. The Postmaster General by his actions is taking away this service.

[Mr. McIntosh.]

The present action of the department in closing rural post offices curtails this service and makes it more difficult and more costly for the agriculturalists to operate. When the officials of the department use the revenue factor as their reason for closing rural post offices they fail to take into account the value of the products produced by these ranch and farm operators who undoubtedly contribute more to the federal treasury through taxation and other means than do a like number of urban dwellers in eastern Canada.

To carry the department's economic argument to the extreme, I would ask why this department bothers to service any of the rural areas of Canada where the cost factor per capita, according to the reasoning of the officials, is much greater than it is for servicing urban areas. The cost factor for servicing the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories on a per capita basis is much greater than it is for servicing metropolitan Montreal or Toronto. Again using the department's economic argument I ask, why service these two areas?

I say that the Post Office Department is not a revenue producing department. Rather it is a service department and should retain that function. I suggest it was never intended to be a revenue making department but rather a service department for the people of Canada. I suggest further that if this department is intended to be a profit making department the opening up of our western provinces and the north will be curtailed.

I suggest that the first consideration of the department should be the service it gives to the people of the country and not the amount of profit or revenue it can obtain for the federal treasury. The people of Canada want this service and have always paid for the service through direct or indirect means. As I said before, if there is excessive spending in other areas by this extravagant government, the Post Office Department should not be used as an instrument to raise additional funds to offset the uncontrolled spending in other areas. I say that the minister should have second thoughts before he imposes this indirect tax upon the people of Canada because if he does I am sure that in the future he and his party will be sorry.

**Mr. Baldwin:** Mr. Chairman, I am persuaded by the approving look of hon. gentlemen on the other side to make a very short contribution to this debate. I hope it will be the last one so far as we are concerned. I always wanted to know how to get approval from the