

*Postal Service*

times as much protest and complaint during the past three months as in the previous seven years.

It used to be that I could mail a letter to my home city of Red Deer, more than 2,300 miles away, in the afternoon and it would be delivered the following afternoon. It now takes at least four days, and sometimes a week. In fact, last Tuesday I received a letter through the mail which was postmarked Ottawa, May 5, 6 p.m. Should it require six days for the delivery of a letter that is posted here in Ottawa? If the postmaster general would like to have this letter I will pass it across to him. There are many more I could give him, as well as many copies of letters written to him about the matter, all verifying the same situation. Now, at the very best a letter that used to be delivered to Montreal from Toronto overnight takes three to four days.

What has gone wrong? It seems to me that the postmaster general is the only one who can answer that question. Yet he does not answer it, but rather pulls red herrings across the trail.

When the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) took office, he declared that his cabinet ministers would be permitted one blunder only. As the *Oshawa Journal* stated in its issue on March 19, the Postmaster General has made three. I think it might be well to place some of this article on the record:

His initial one was in trying to cut off rural mail delivery in Canada on Saturdays. He had to retract that edict through pressure from his own Liberal followers from the rural constituencies of the country.

Then he slapped prohibitive postal rates on newspapers and other publications. He doubled the rates, tripled them and in the case of the advertising portion of newspapers, he sextupled them—

The minister's third blunder, and perhaps the most glaring, was in his dealings with his own employees, the mail couriers who through good weather and bad carry the load for the postal department.

As a result, I believe that we have had a breakdown in morale, and certainly we have had a breakdown in service. This article continues:

One thing is clear. It's now Kierans who should walk off the job, and quickly. He should go by command of the Prime Minister who promised his ministers would be permitted only one gross blunder.

This newspaper claims the minister has made three. This expression from the press reveals one of the most sensitive areas

[Mr. Thompson.]

touched by the policies of the postmaster general.

Also what bothers me in this regard is the simple fact that the publishers in this country were denied the opportunity of coming before parliament, presenting their case and explaining their proposals. These people are conscientious and are rendering a service. They are doing their job just as well as government ministers or as we try to do ours. But the government refused to send Bill C-116 to committee, as was suggested from this side of the house. We were overruled. Thus, no opportunity was given the publishing industry to put its case before the committee, as is the normal, democratic procedure.

I sympathize with the minister in his effort to minimize the deficits of the postal operations in this country. I am not accusing him of anything here; I think that his objective is a good one, though in this regard I wonder why the postal department should be singled out from, shall we say, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation or other services rendered by government agencies, crown corporations or other government departments.

As far as my constituency is concerned, I have very little to complain about. During the last year five new post offices were built, and two major post offices reconstructed in order to meet expanding business. However, what is tragic is that in his sincerity and dedication to the job that he has been given to do, there is an inability to select sound policies from the deluge of advice that he has invited. The minister has failed to consult various communities across the country on how changes might best effect those reforms that are necessary. It is not good enough for the minister to stand in his place this afternoon and to tell us we are against change. The minister invites trouble when he does not consult the various people who are affected in the country. I ask, how can he justify rate increases for weekly newspapers of between 400 and 700 per cent? Does he wish to destroy them? Already, since April 1, a number of weekly newspapers have had to cease publication. I know of at least seven such papers which have had to fold since January because of the extra cost of postal delivery. I can name at least twenty publications—they are trade, professional and farm publications—which have likewise folded. Worse than that, the minister has driven many such publications across the border. Those magazines being published on the other side of the border do not, pay excessive rates as second