

Post Office

rates for all classifications would be initiated. I really can't say that I feel it essential that our postal services make money or indeed break even, particularly when I am aware of the very substantial subsidies provided for radio and TV, industry, agriculture, education and social services.

In other words, many areas require assistance from the government, and the Post Office should be no different. Because of the decision that was made in 1969, the Canadian Medical Association journal which was published weekly now can only afford publication twice a month, or 26 times a year.

Mr. Cullen: The doctors can afford it.

Mr. Yewchuk: This is not a remark worthy of the hon. member. I hope he will not try to sidetrack the issue by stating that the doctors can afford it, because that is a ridiculous statement. In any case, the changes which were made by the Post Office Department at that time meant a fourfold increase in the cost of mailing some journals and newspapers. The publishers of other magazines, such as MacLean-Hunter which publishes a paper entitled the Medical Post, and other commercial publications which publish competing magazines or periodicals such as the MD or the Canadian Doctor continue to enjoy second-class mailing privileges. This is not the case so far as the Canadian Medical Association journal is concerned, and the reason given by the Post Office as to why it must pay these high rates—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Charles E. Haliburton (South Western Nova): Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to give a portion of my time to the hon. member who has just sat down. My remarks are very general. The Post Office Department is one of the spheres of government that comes into contact with every Canadian person on a regular basis. Therefore, it is one of those activities of government which should set an example to others in terms of efficiency, courtesy and service. Unfortunately, our Canadian Post Office over the past number of years has arrived at a position where it fails to establish those things in the minds of the Canadian public. Rather, it establishes in their minds a public service which is bureaucratic, inefficient and unresponsive to the needs and wishes of the public.

● (1640)

The Canadian people are no longer willing to accept the exorbitant postal rates which they have to pay for minimal services. This is the crux of the postal crisis in this day and age. Each year, in spite of growing postal rates, the Post Office records a deficit. For the fiscal year 1971-72 revenues increased \$71.3 million to a record level of over \$500 million, while costs increased \$47.9 million, leaving the Post Office again with a deficit of some \$77 million. This situation is intolerable, but it does not look as if it will change very radically or very rapidly.

Essentially, the Post Office should be concerned with providing a service to the Canadian public. I submit, Sir, that the stature of the service being provided at this time is not satisfactory. Only a few years ago one of the Liberal

[Mr. Yewchuk.]

cabinet ministers charged with the responsibility of looking after the Post Office determined that he was going to make it a profitable institution. I submit that the Canadian public is not so concerned about whether the Post Office can operate profitably as it is concerned that it should serve the Canadian people in an efficient and proper manner. The Canadian public is prepared to subsidize the Post Office to a reasonable degree. I am not suggesting that the Post Office be given carte-blanche, but the people of Canada would be happy if it provided rapid service, with efficient mail delivery on terms that are convenient to the public, even if it has a deficit.

Here I am thinking of businessmen dealing in large sums of money or in matters which are of extreme urgency and importance. I am thinking, for instance, of doctors sending prescriptions by mail, of drugstores sending drugs by mail, of lawyers sending orders to the courts to be approved by mail and of persons involved in property transactions where large amounts of money may be transmitted by mail. I am thinking about this matter in terms of the cost of sending money and in terms of human suffering where drugs are being sent by mail. These are much more serious matters to the Canadian people than the Post Office suffering a reasonable deficit.

While I am speaking of drugs, I am sorry that I do not have with me a clipping from the *Halifax Herald*. A few weeks ago it carried a story relating to the drop in efficiency of the Post Office in the area of New Caledonia, which is one of the few inland areas of Nova Scotia some 30 or 40 miles from the sea. Between that area and Barss Corner traditionally over the years there had been same-day delivery service. The result was that a physician in one of the centres could prescribe drugs for a patient and the prescription could be sent by mail and the drugs delivered on the same day. But now, even with modern technology, not to mention all the consultants' reports with respect to the Post Office, delivery is not less than four days and generally takes five days. Mr. Speaker, in this case the distance to be covered is approximately six miles.

Another place where there has been a drop in service, which hopefully will be rectified in the near future with the establishment of a new post office, is an area in the Annapolis Valley. It is not in my riding and perhaps I should not be concerning myself with it, but it did gain some notoriety in the newspapers. Minas is a village, approaching the status of a town, which in fact is five or six miles in length. It now takes four days for a letter to get from one end of that village to the other end. The reason is that the mechanism for mail collection and delivery results in a letter having to travel from one end of the village to a sorting centre, from there to a second sorting center and from that second centre back to the other end of the village. That is a ridiculous situation, something which could not have happened in Canadian postal antiquity, which could not have happened back in my childhood when mail was carried by train and the sorting was done during the course of train travel.

I have here a quotation from the *Globe and Mail* of November 16, 1972, which I believe reflects the general attitude to the service being provided by the Post Office. In one paragraph it reads: