

Postal Rates

where in the world. We make more telephone calls; we make more business telephone calls than ever was the case before. Certainly we are among the leaders in the world in respect of telephone service.

● (1630)

Not long ago the Post Office put out a beautiful brochure with a lot of b.s. in it indicating how well they were doing and how much mail they were handling—

An hon. Member: What does “b.s.” stand for?

Mr. Peters: You can interpret it yourself in whatever language you use. That brochure contained a number of things. In the middle it showed sorting boxes as part of its operations. We operated in this country for years with only that part of the operation. Today we have boxes on the street that indicate that if you put your mail in that box at a certain time it will be picked up at a certain time. We have other boxes which indicate that if you put your mail in it will be picked up sooner or later, and I suppose we have other ones that just state “later”.

I am sure the minister can remember when a former minister decided there was not going to be any first-class mail, except for postage purposes. All the mail, as indicated by this brochure, is automatically dumped in together with parcels, large brown envelopes, envelopes with little green markings on the side that indicate whether it is first-class, second-class or third-class, or some other kind of class, and occasionally with a few small first-class envelopes. If we were to take those envelopes out and handle them in the most appropriate way they could be delivered expeditiously. If we were to bypass the regional post office and all the terminal post offices we would have a decent first-class mail service in Canada again, one that would probably live up to the representation developed in years gone by the Post Office Department in Canada.

I am sure other members of Parliament have carried out an investigation to determine the fastest possible way of sending mail. I have found that if you have a bunch of boxes, a bunch of *Hansards* or whatever else you want to send out and you put them in a bag with one first-class letter and mail the bag to yourself at your home address, you will get the mail quickly. I did this one Friday afternoon. When I arrived home by air on Saturday afternoon I picked that mail up off my porch where the mailman had delivered it.

Had I put that first-class letter through the post office in the normal way it would likely have gone from here to the main post office terminal and then through a lot of processes. Somebody would probably have looked at it, it would have been sorted four or five times, and someone would decide that if it should have a yellow dot on the front of it, they would send it to a different section. It might even have some typing on it which would involve something else. I ask hon. members if they have not found this to be true. Chances are it would take five days to reach a destination in northern Ontario. It may well take longer if the employees at the Post Office here decided to send it to the terminal in Toronto. That would

[Mr. Peters.]

involve a week or perhaps two. We really do not have much mail any more of a first-class category. If we handled that mail on a first-class basis it could be delivered expeditiously, but it would have to be sorted.

I can remember talking to some postal workers who said that on Monday morning they had stacks of mail to deliver. It was noon before they got halfway through their walks. They took the remainder of that morning mail and put it back in the box. They picked up the afternoon mail and started again on their walks. Often it was Wednesday before they finished delivering both the morning and afternoon mail from the Monday.

The hon. member shakes his head. He has not been here very long and probably has not had much experience with the mailing service here, but he will learn. Mail service to a member of Parliament is damned important, and it is damned important to the businessman. Much of the business of this country is done by mail service. Much of that mail involves bills, orders and other kinds of letters, but it is all mail that businessmen want delivered in an expeditious manner.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Scott, Victoria-Haliburton): Order, please.

Mr. Peters: What I am saying is that if we decide to provide real first-class service, then 17 cents is a reasonable cost.

For years in northern Ontario if a farmer wanted a part for an engine or some piece of machinery that he could not buy locally, he would phone Toronto or send a night letter. If the supplier had the part he could send it by mail. He could have it put on the train that night in Toronto at six or seven o'clock and that order would be back in northern Ontario at six o'clock the following morning and the farmer would get it at eight. That was an excellent way of doing business.

Today if you send a letter to Toronto ordering a part you might as well send it via Tokyo because you probably will not get that part back for two weeks. The delay may not be entirely the fault of the Post Office but certainly the shipper will say it is and most people would back him up.

The previous government privatized mail service a long time ago. I have a former postmaster general sitting very close to me and he represents a riding right next to mine. He has the district post office in his area. It was very interesting to see how his government privatized this service.

Not long ago a newspaper man asked all the government departments in North Bay how they sent their mail, and, with the exception of the Department of Veterans Affairs, everyone that wanted the mail delivered as first-class mail sent it by courier. That former government privatized mail services by allowing these couriers to become engaged in a post office operation. Even the Post Office sends its mail that way. The Unemployment Insurance Commission sends its mail that way.

An hon. Member: Say that's not true, John.