

*Post Office Act*

the slowness of some forms of mail delivery, and particularly that service from Toronto and Montreal to Napanee. This is particularly so in respect of parcel post. It is used extensively by professional people such as doctors and dentists, as well as the hospitals. These people are still complaining about the slowness of the delivery of mail. As for the recent strike, any government which would allow a strike to continue at such a tremendous cost to the Canadian people, and then reduces mail service to a five day week does not have any knowledge of the needs of the Canadian people and apparently has no desire to improve this service.

I have before me a letter written by the Postmaster General. I am sure hon. members were pleased to receive this in explanation and in answer to those protests made by many of us on behalf of rural mail contractors. There are two explanations contained in this letter dated October, 1968. The first is:

To rural route contractors and those performing other small service contracts, doing the work themselves, and paid on the basis of an annual rate, we propose making the regular payment for the period which the service was interrupted, less the normal operating expenses which were not incurred while the service was not performed.

The second explanation refers to larger contracts and it says in part:

In these cases we propose to pay the contractor his direct out of pocket expenses where the contract is on a per annum basis.

All our rural mail contracts are on a per annum basis. The full cost of payments to all these contractors has been previously budgeted for and the government's attempt to save a little money at the expense of these rural mail contractors seems to be pretty small, in light of the strike which was partly the fault of the government, because of its apathy. I am not placing all the blame on the government but surely this strike resulted partly from the lack of government action.

In my riding we must deal with rural and urban problems. We have no door to door mail delivery. I say to the Minister: Let us forget about this retrograde step to a five day week. I say on behalf of the farmers in the constituency of Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, they must get daily delivery. It is one hundred years since confederation. This is 1968, not 1868. If ever we needed a daily delivery we need it now.

What about the farmers who depend on rural route deliveries for their various agriculture returns and cheques, and their daily newspapers. Many of them depend on

[Mr. Alkenbrack.]

this service for these things. We do not have any house to house deliveries in my riding, but I have heard many protests from those who do in the neighbouring cities of Kingston and Belleville. I have heard the people say there that they used to get mail delivery twice a day, but that they are now getting it only once a day. They have stated that after the Trudeau government gets through with them they will only receive mail five days a week.

What about the differences in the services offered by various types of post offices? There will be no equity of service under the minister's new measure. In my riding for example I should like to compare the proposed services to be provided by the Napanee town post office and the service to be provided to the hamlet of Lavant.

The Napanee post office is owned and operated by the federal government, but under the minister's new measures no one will be able to obtain service there on a Saturday. We will not be able to buy a money order, obtain information or pick up a general delivery letter. The wickets will be closed. I hope the local people will be able to walk into the post offices and unlock their own boxes in order to get their mail. I hope the minister is not going to lock the entrance doors of the local post offices. Of course, since he is discontinuing the services of the post office savings banks, people who come to certain centres on Saturday will not be able to use them, either. This does not apply to the settled portions of Canada. I know that probably no one in my town uses post office savings methods any more, but there are people in remote areas of Canada who use the post office savings facilities, and the abolition of these services will be a hardship to them.

● (9:50 p.m.)

Let us get back to the other type of post offices. I wish to refer to the post office in Lavant. It is in a general store. The local residents who come into Lavant to do their shopping on Saturday will also ask for their mail and the storekeeper will certainly give it to them, as he should and can. I ask the minister, is this the just society? There will be no service in Napanee on Saturday, but plenty of service in Lavant. The latter is as it should be. I say again, this is 1968, not 1868.

At the same time as the minister is abolishing the daily mail service, I have just received a request which came in this week from the reeve and council of the townships