

*Postal Service*

the opposition for all the problems which result from its inefficiency and bungling. About two months ago the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) blamed the opposition for his inability to sell wheat and for the lack of grain to load ships at Vancouver. That again was said to be the fault of the opposition.

I think such comments by ministers perhaps indicate they are attempting to throw out a smokescreen of confusion. The Postmaster General criticized a previous Conservative government for not having a training program for the postal employees. He bragged that he has a beautiful program which will cost thousands upon thousands of dollars.

I have in my hand a speech made by the Postmaster General in January which indicates the extent to which mail delivery is delayed between Montreal and Ottawa. He said that this unfortunate situation could be attributed in the main to an unanticipated and unforeseen increase in mail volume which has exceeded plant and trained staff capacity. If he has such a good training program, why then is there a shortage of trained staff?

Before that, the minister attempted to confuse the country and the house by remarks intended to take the heat off his department. I suppose that I might be considered as making an allegation, particularly by the minister. This would make me an "allegator". Being an "allegator" I suppose I must substantiate what I have suggested.

● (8:30 p.m.)

I have in my hand another one of the minister's speeches. This one was delivered on January 22. At that time he said in reference to the closing of small post offices:

To give you an idea of the dimensions of this problem I might mention that one-quarter of our 10,000 post offices earn less than \$450 a year—

One week later, on January 29 of the same year he made a speech in which he said:

—I might mention that one-quarter of our 8,000 post offices earn less than \$50 a year—

There appears to be some discrepancy in the minister's remarks. I am wondering how much attention we should pay to what he says. I have copies of both these speeches from which I have read directly.

The Postmaster General tries to blame the former Conservative government for the situation in which he finds himself. This Liberal government has been in power since 1963. Why has it not solved this problem in

the past six years, and why is it only suddenly this year that all these problems have developed?

In January of 1969 the Postmaster General made another statement in respect of the inefficiency of the post office. He said:

—in one post office which came to my attention the sole customers were the postmaster and his family.

If this sort of thing is going on, it must have been going on for six years under the Liberal government. I do not suppose this is a particularly good example of efficiency; that is, keeping a post office open at a cost of \$1,000 or more to serve a man, his wife and family, then blaming the Conservatives for it.

The Postmaster General concluded his remarks on that occasion by stating an old cliché we often hear from government ministers. He suggested that the Conservative party is simply resisting change. He said that we resist changes, and that is the only thing we do. That is kind of ridiculous.

**An hon. Member:** How true.

**Mr. Yewchuk:** It is true that it is ridiculous. The minister must admit that change does not necessarily mean progress. Progress should not be confused with change or associated with it, because sometimes change brings about a worse situation. I think that is what the changes in the Post Office department in the past ten months have accomplished. There has been no indication of progress. If there has been progress, I have not been able to see it. Before the minister suggests that we are resistant to change and before he brings about any change, he should make sure that the situation will be better as a result.

We have all heard many valid criticisms of the Post Office department. I do not think I need mention all of them as they have been mentioned before by other hon. members. I should perhaps refer to deterioration of the situation faced by post office employees, to say nothing of the situation which now exists between officials of the department and the postal unions. Many of the changes made allegedly have been to increase efficiency. Many speakers have referred to this situation. I wish to refer to what has been called the post office reorganization. The matter of immediate concern is what I refer to as the arbitrary decision of the Postmaster General to close down many small post offices in Canada. Apparently this has been done with little or no concern whatsoever in respect of