

of Canada, and having regard in particular to the fact that we might be faced with a strike in the public service as it relates to the postal service, I wonder whether, under those circumstances, it might not be advisable to examine the potential use of the system.

While the President of the Treasury Board is awaiting his officials so they might acquaint him with this system, let me recount an incident which occurred yesterday in my office relating to a constituent with whom I had been dealing for about three weeks. Near the end of April this constituent was in need of a substantial refund cheque from Revenue Canada—I am sure the President of the Treasury Board is well acquainted with the delays that take place when those cheques are in issue, and he communicated with me. I had a promise from the deputy minister in Revenue Canada that my constituent would receive the refund in the mail on or before May 10. Of course, the cheque did not come and I was once again confronted with a concerned and upset constituent.

● (1600)

Thereupon I communicated again with the office of the deputy minister of Revenue Canada, taxation division, to find out the explanation; it went something like this. From and after May 23 various other government departments, dispatching much-needed pension cheques and family allowance cheques, decided that it would be more appropriate if their cheques were dispatched in a priority situation over regular revenue refund cheques. Under the circumstances they opted to use the facilities of the postal service in priority to the use of that service by Revenue Canada.

It appears that the emergency which was implanted as a consequence of the fear of a postal strike has passed and now the cheques can be issued. But it strikes me that under the circumstances the dispatch of cheques of this nature, together with the dispatch and transfer of funds generally, might well be undertaken through this system. I suggest it is incumbent upon the President of the Treasury Board to examine the implications and the apparent advantages. He should undertake to place before the House an explanation as to why, if after examination it appears appropriate and advisable, such a system is not in fact put in place.

I can well understand the concerns of some members of this House, particularly the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, in seeing that those people for whom he so often speaks, the pensioners, cannot receive regularly in an efficient fashion the cheques upon which they so desperately depend. It may well confront the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre with a bit of a dilemma when he realizes that, in order to implement a system which is both efficient and effective, it may well occur that members of CUPW may not have the same numerical strength they had before.

I am reminded of a comment made by the President of the Treasury Board in the House on May 12 when he said the following:

Supply

I have been particularly heartened to encounter in the public service of our country dedicated, competent, and responsible people who share my objective of good management and my determination to achieve it.

I recall receiving just the other day a letter from one of my constituents, a company called Con-Drain Co. Ltd. from Concord, Ontario. Earlier that company had written to me complaining about postal service which took 11 days for the transmission of a letter the great distance of four miles. Of course, I communicated directly with the Postmaster General raising my concern at the tardy mail delivery. As a result of that response, the delivery of mail deteriorated, if one can imagine it. Now I have a letter dated May 7 in which my constituent indicates the following:

You will note that the dates on these being April 15, April 30, May 1 and May 5—

The date of the letter addressed to me was May 7. It continues:

The first three were posted at Don Mills, the fourth and the one with the fastest service was posted in Montreal.

It took a full three weeks for the delivery of a letter. I presume these are the same people for which the President of the Treasury Board has such dedication. The state of the public service in this country is deplorable. The Auditor General has commented on that.

Earlier in the House I had occasion to direct some questions to the President of the Treasury Board with respect to this very issue. The remarkable response I received was that, as a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I would be in a position to in some way magically rectify the absurdities with which we are confronted. That is like suggesting that, as a result of something we might do here today, we can affect the outcome of the battle of Waterloo.

There is absolutely no possibility that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, as it is presently structured under the rules of this House, can do anything but agonize over the past. The President of the Treasury Board well knows that because he was the chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in the last House.

It is no answer to praise the public service. Doubtless there are thousands of competent, dedicated, hard-working people therein, but what I fail to hear from the President of the Treasury Board is one word of condemnation for those who in fact do not do their jobs, for those who perpetrate the kind of slovenly service to which I just made reference. At some point in time the President of the Treasury Board must acknowledge his responsibility for the control of the public service in Canada and do something concrete, other than coming to the House and saying, "I find in the public service people for whom I have nothing but the greatest of praise". I know it is easy and it may be delightful for members of the House who have public servants in their constituencies to praise them regularly, but when will the President of the Treasury Board, and indeed his other colleagues, come to recognize that there is a higher good and a greater demand placed upon government by the people of Canada who are offended by the way in which they are served by the public service? We need a concrete