

*Railway Mail Service*

There is one other matter I want to mention in this connection, and that is the seriousness to our Post Office Department of sudden changes in time tables by the two main railways in this country. Before I left home it came to my attention that the Canadian Pacific Railway had made certain alterations in their time table on the main line. I did not realize at the time that this would mean a serious handicap to the Post Office Department who were delivering mails to the Canadian Pacific, but on looking into the matter I discovered that this very change meant a delay of nearly a day to me in my journey to Ottawa to attend this session. It has also been brought to my attention that this change means a delay in the carriage of mails every day. Perhaps, again, the railway commission might look into this matter. I therefore throw the thought broadcast, that the Post Office Department should always be considered by our two great railways when any changes in the time tables are contemplated; for we cannot possibly have the best service unless ample notice is given of such intended changes. The Post Office Department comprises so many units, and there are so many intricate rules and regulations governing the service, that the department cannot possibly adapt itself to changed conditions at a moment's notice. And for that matter, I understand that sometimes they do not get even a moment's notice, the time tables being changed without their knowledge and the department not finding this out until afterwards. This is something in regard to which the railways might very well work in co-operation with the Post Office Department. I have been advocating the giving of more business to the National Railways, and it strikes me that the National Railways themselves might in this respect meet the Post Office Department halfway by giving it ample notice of changes in the time tables.

Before I close I want to point out again why I have presumed to offer these various suggestions. Our Post Office Department is I believe independent of all large corporations in the country, and I am sure we do not want it to be so warped as at any time to make the postal service of Canada conform to the wishes of any private concern. On the other hand, it is our duty as shareholders in a great railway to advise our postal officials to bend themselves just a little in the direction of giving to the Canadian National Railways, whenever this is possible, whatever business is available. I think I am only doing my duty in offering that advice.

[Mr. C. W. Stewart.]

Mr. JOHN EVANS (Saskatoon): This question affects us very keenly in western Canada. Last year I brought to the attention of the House certain figures which the Postmaster General (Mr. Murphy) described as incorrect. I shall not reiterate any statements I made on that occasion, but I do believe that a discrimination exists so far as any equitable distribution of mail service as between the two railways is concerned. No through mail is carried by the Canadian National either from Montreal or from Toronto. To me this does not seem right. In western Canada the local situation is even worse; towns of considerable size between Winnipeg and the mountains are subjected to very much delay in the delivery of their mail. We can take such places as Rivers, Melville, Watrous and Saskatoon, where we find that the mails are delayed at least one day in their delivery. The mail arrives in Saskatoon four hours later than it would if carried by the Canadian National, and the result is that business letters cannot be answered the same day and replies from Winnipeg to business men in Saskatoon are delayed another twenty-four hours. The situation as regards the mail to the east is just as bad. I am informed by the Post Office Department that the business mail of Saskatoon leaves that city on a Canadian National train at 23.50 and that at Regina it is transferred to Canadian Pacific train No. 4. Lately the mail has not been arriving in time to enable its transfer to Canadian Pacific No. 4 to be carried out. I cannot see why these mails should be transferred at Regina. All Canadian National Railway lines converge at Winnipeg, and the trains on all three lines of the Canadian National arrive at least one hour before either the Canadian Pacific train or the Canadian National through train leaves Winnipeg for the east. I think that is correct. Anyway, if it is not true as regards the Canadian Pacific it is true as regards the Canadian National, and there is no reason why the mails should be transferred at Regina. In a communication which I have from the Post Office department it is stated:

This delay can be eliminated by transferring the mail service now performed by the Canadian National between Saskatoon and Regina to a Canadian Pacific train which does make the connection in time.

I do not think that should be done; these mails should all go right through at least to Winnipeg. This matter was taken up, I believe, by a committee representing both sides, but what has happened since I do not know. As regards the local mail particularly, and also the through mail, before discussing the matter any further I would like to hear what