

Postal Service Policies

ing postal stations in rural areas were against progress and that is why I cannot support the motion.

In conclusion, and in order to allow another member to speak before 4 o'clock, I would like to put into the record the statement that the president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers made when Bill C-116 was introduced two years ago. Mr. Houle said that members of Parliament who protested against the closing down of small post offices and the improvement of rural mail service in some areas were more interested in patronage than in the service that the Post Office wants to give its users. He used an expression often heard in Quebec when he said, as was reported in an article in *La Presse* in October 1968:

In the country, he added, it is still like in the days of Séraphin, the post office is really something.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, those who object to the closing down of small post offices and want to go back to the old system are against progress and I do not think that they deserve to sit in this chamber.

[*English*]

Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we have had quite a number of observations from members in different parts of the House, but other than the remarks of the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) a few moments ago and those of the hon. member for Gaspé (Mr. Cyr) who has just spoken we have heard nothing very favourable to the Post Office.

I listened to the Postmaster General's remarks with considerable interest. One thing which I noticed was also mentioned by my colleague, the hon. member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador (Mr. Peddle), and that is that the Postmaster General seemed to be possessed with the idea of change for the sake of change. The last speaker said that we must have progress. That is all very fine, Mr. Speaker, but unless there is some purpose in changing, or some appreciation of what progress is, there is no point of getting up in this House and using blanket words that mean very little to cover large areas.

At one point in his remarks the Postmaster General pointed out that only \$15,000 was allocated to Post Office training in the days of the Conservative government when the Hon. William Hamilton was Postmaster General. That may well be, but one comes to the inevitable conclusion that contrasted with the costly training of today there seemed to be no problems in the Post Office at that time. The

[*Mr. Cyr.*]

mail went through, the rates were not raised and there were no problems.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nesbitt: Since this minister has taken office under the present government there has been nothing but trouble in the Post Office, nothing but complaints from the public. If this is the minister's idea of change and progress, it is certainly a peculiar interpretation of those terms. I will not spend time this afternoon reciting the catalogue of blunders, errors and stupidities that have occurred in the Post Office Department. They are well known to all members even if they do not like to recite them, and some of my colleagues have already dealt with this aspect of the problem.

I notice that the Postmaster General is not in the House. I am not blaming him for not being present during all of this debate because there are other things on his mind at the moment, such as the possibility of a postal strike. I assume he is trying to keep an eye on the present negotiations with the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) and on the meetings that are going on this afternoon. I cannot help but recall a remark made not long ago by the Leader of the Ralliement Cr ditiste (Mr. Caouette) that there were very few members in the House. Perhaps it is worth while observing that only one of his colleagues is present at the moment.

Yesterday the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) asked the Postmaster General about the closing down of small post offices all across the country. As reported at page 7160 of *Hansard*, the minister replied:

—all hon. members on both sides of the House will be relieved to learn that this program is coming to a close.

Well, perhaps we are relieved. The hon. member for Gasp  pointed out that 56 post offices are being closed in his riding alone. I have no complaint in this regard because in my constituency only one or two are being closed, and while I am sorry to see them close because they remove a certain part of life from the rural area, I realize that it is because of the costs and so forth. But in many ridings, as members have brought to the attention of the House on many occasions, post offices are being closed in a wholesale manner. I am sure the Postmaster General does not appreciate this, but it has been pointed out by hon. members. This means one thing to people who live in Montreal or