

Postal Service

Another postmaster, assisted by his wife, looks after a post office which serves five other settlements and the surrounding area. For this he receives \$150 a month. This is \$150 a month for two people covering rent and salary. Should we not get the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) to work that one out in accordance with the minimum wage scale? When I discovered the low salaries paid to these government employees I wrote to each and every postmaster or postmistress in all rural communities in my district, and I established the following salaries out of 25 replies I received. The lowest salary is \$11.50 a week for a female operating from Monday to Saturday in her home. Another postmistress is getting \$16 a week after 30 years' service. One lady after 20 years' service is getting \$22.20 per week. The lowest in the male category is \$25.50 per week for operating both the post office and the C.N.T. office.

• (5:40 p.m.)

The Postmaster General may tell me that their salaries are based on a few hours a day only but people who have to walk miles for their mail cannot come at certain hours in the day; and the only ones who seem to be aware of this fact are these people themselves. So these postal employees continue to serve the community, and not five days a week but in lots of cases six and seven days a week. So I ask the minister not to talk to me about treatment of employees or about the pride of employees.

Are these examples which I have outlined examples of the pledge of the government that every individual or group of individuals must have equality of opportunity regardless of the part of the country in which they live? Is this an example of the human rights which the government has pledged to the people of Canada? How are these people going to communicate, Mr. Speaker? How are they going to conduct a dialogue with the government? How are they going to get their complaints to the government's regional desks?

Where is the Postmaster General going to place his information centres that he advocates be located in post offices around the country in order to give the people of Canada a channel of communication to know what is going on in government? Probably he is going to locate his information centres in the mail boxes. Or perhaps he intends to send out this information by the new method of sending couriers around the rural districts with mail. Probably he is going to resurrect the town crier.

There is a great deal of uncertainty right now among the people who man the 60 odd post offices in my riding and are potential candidates for the Postmaster General's axe. These 60 people represent some 60 Newfoundland families. They do not know where to turn. They do not know when or where the axe will fall. As one 85 year old pensioner wrote me, "I used to enjoy at the end of the month leaning against the post office, waiting for me check. But now I daren't do it, because that feller Keerings might haul her away!" This might sound funny to some hon. members, but to me it is very serious.

My whole point is this. This government seems to be embarked upon a program of "profit or else". To my way of thinking a government cannot operate in this manner. This is the way in which business and industry operates. But unlike business and industry, I think it is essential that government have a much higher concern, a concern for human rights. Recently the minister in charge of housing resigned, and within one week after that resignation many measures were introduced to improve the housing situation in this country. The post office department is in an even worse mess. For the good of Canada may I humbly suggest that we might get a little action if the Postmaster General were to resign.

I feel that running the post office department in a country the size of Canada is a full time job, a full time job for a man with considerable talent. My humble suggestion would be for the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to appoint a full time postmaster general and allow the present incumbent to devote his full time to playing with his satellites.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, on March 4 the Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans), the former postmaster general, declared to this house: "I am going to adopt a pretty skeptical and cynical approach". He has been true to his word. We have listened to him today talking in that vein. To the mounting criticism from every corner of the country his attitude, as recorded many times in *Hansard* and in numerous speeches, is one of cynicism and arrogance.

We have listened to this same kind of speech today. This attitude is one which causes concern and hurt for the patrons of the postal department from west to east and from sea to sea. In the years that I have been in this house, I have had very little complaint from the public about the postal service of this country. In fact, I have received ten