

Postal Service

leadership contest of his party and was elected Prime Minister. His performance these past two years has been disappointing. Although Spring has come and the flowers are blooming in Ottawa, I say that Canadians are not prepared to go on sniffing flowers. Long ago someone said that the people should eat cake when bread was scarce. Here we are in economic difficulties and the government is still sniffing flowers. School children may continue singing their hosannas, but Canadians are beginning to sing the blues because of the economic problems confronting the country.

Canadians have become apprehensive on seeing the deterioration from coast to coast of a previously good postal service. The Post Office performance was good in B.C. before E.K. You could speak about B.C. in times that were B.K. No matter how you fool around with the initials, Post Office performance has slipped and the Canadian public has become apprehensive about the administration of the department. Although the minister is interested in other areas of endeavour I am confining my remarks to the Post Office Department. At one time the phrase "post haste" meant something. It means little now when Post Office performance has been slipping.

Since I can only speak for ten minutes—and the time limit is somewhat restrictive—I wish to point out that we also have problems in the area of passports. Canadians legitimately are concerned about government inadequacies in Post Office administration and in matters relating to passports. Our people have become understandably concerned about government defence reviews, social welfare programs and a host of other matters coming under the purview of government policy. Where can the government employ this minister? If one examines the list of ministers one will see that they are reasonably secure in their slots. I, therefore, say that this minister will have to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I was prompted to rise in this debate because of the remarks of the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Nesbitt). I see that he has returned to the house. First, I apologize for not being here for the entire debate, since I had to serve this afternoon on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I wish to make a few brief comments about some of the matters raised this evening. On an earlier occasion when the government sought to

[Mr. Nowlan.]

bring forward legislation to increase postage rates, hon. members of the opposition indicated they were opposed to those increases. I merely wish to point out that in the Public Accounts Committees of previous parliaments, the views expressed by hon. members of the opposition were not the views they expressed publicly here in the House of Commons. To illustrate this point may I refer to the follow-up report of the Auditor-General to the Public Accounts Committee dated October 31, 1968. This document refers to the 4th report of the Public Accounts Committee for the year 1963 presented to the House of Commons on December 19 of that year. The document reads in part:

The Committee expressed its belief that Early consideration should be given by Parliament to ways and means of covering the loss of the Post Office Department in handling second class mail and requested the Auditor General to keep the matter before Parliament in his annual Reports in order that subsequent committees may give consideration to it.

In its Fourth Report of 1966-67, the Committee stated in part:

—that it feels that there is something wrong when no action has been taken with respect to, and apparently very little consideration given to, its recommendation on this matter. The Committee first drew the matter to the attention of the House in its Third Report 1958 and, while minor changes have been made, the annual loss has continued to increase and the Committee is of the opinion that sufficient consideration has not been given to the solution of this problem. It considers it essential that the Post Office Department or Parliament immediately find ways and means of covering the loss of the Post Office Department in handling second class mail without this being done at the expense of other classes of mail, keeping in mind, however, the need of assistance to small independently-owned newspapers circulating in rural areas.

The latter recommendations I believe were put forward by an all party committee of the House of Commons. In the first meeting of that committee in the twenty-eighth parliament—and I am a committee member—arguments arose as to whether those recommendations had been implemented. At that time the Auditor General indicated that some slow progress was being made towards achieving implementation of these recommendations. We all know that the twenty-eighth parliament has passed a bill to increase postal rates, particularly second class mailing rates. Hon. members opposite have argued that this was an unpopular and improper action to take. According to the information I have the opposite conviction was expressed by those same hon. members in the Public Accounts