

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

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**Saturday, December 29, 1951**

The house met at eleven o'clock.

### POSTAL SERVICE

**PRIVILEGE, MR. DREW—DELAY IN MAIL DELIVERY**

**Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege affecting both the privileges and the responsibilities of the members of this house. It is something which I think should be raised today, in view of the fact that we have reason I think to expect that we are within some measurable distance of the termination of this session.

This morning I received a postal package addressed to me at the House of Commons, and very clearly addressed and very properly packaged, which was postmarked "Vancouver, December 17." I recognize, and perhaps it will be understood by hon. members that I have as much reason as anyone in this house to recognize, the immensely heavy responsibilities of the postal department at this time of the year. I cannot however recall any Christmas or any time when there have been so many complaints from every part of the country in regard to the delay in the delivery of mail. This is something that affects the business of this house, that affects the business of this country. It has wide ramifications. I will simply give one personal experience which illustrates what happens in cases of this kind. I wrote a letter to a friend who was critically ill in a Toronto hospital. He died five days later. The letter had not been delivered and it was therefore returned to me. That merely serves to underline the possibilities that arise, from both the personal and the business point of view, where delays of that kind occur.

I can understand delays of one, two and three days perhaps, just because of the immense accumulation of mail; but surely between here and Toronto and here and Montreal it is not consistent with the place that the postal services have come to occupy in our whole economic and social structure that within these short distances there should be delays of a whole week and more in the delivery of letters. And most certainly no congestion can explain the delay of twelve days in the delivery of first-class mail or packaged mail from Vancouver to here.

I recognize—and as I say, I have reason to recognize perhaps as much as anyone here, next to the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and the members of the cabinet—what the real accumulation of mail is at this time of year, but I do think that with all this heavy pressure the Postmaster General (Mr. Rinfret) should assure us that, in the light of the experience of this year, adequate steps will be taken to ensure that next year, or on any intervening occasion when there is heavy pressure on the mail services, adequate provisions will be made for delivery within a reasonable time in relation to the circumstances.

I point out that not only may personal messages and very important personal communications be delayed, with very unhappy consequences in certain cases, but also that the business of this house is related to the delivery of the mail and that important business organizations all over this country depend upon some reasonable promptness of delivery. I am sure that none of this delay is the responsibility of the men themselves who deliver the mail. There is no more loyal and hard-working organization in this country. I am satisfied, however, that something has happened to affect the whole organization, because delays of this kind have become too frequent, not only in these recent weeks but for months past. This calls for some reassurance to the house.

**Mr. Bradette:** This is good!

**Hon. Edouard Rinfret (Postmaster General):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the opposition did not give me notice of his intention of raising this question. He did not bring to my attention the reference he has made to the mail he received.

**Mr. Drew:** I only received it half an hour ago.

**Mr. Rinfret:** But I wish to point out to the house that in all our advertising we gave notice to the public that we could not accept in the mail any first-class mail for delivery in time for Christmas if it was put in the mail after December 17.

**Mr. Drew:** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to interrupt, but I insist that the record be correct. This was not put in the mail after