

Postal Service

The postal service in this country is in a serious mess. The situation is alarming and is of alarming proportions. This does not seem to mean anything to the Postmaster General. All the criticisms and charges made during this debate and during the course of the debate on the government reorganization bill, seem to have fallen on deaf ears. In my own part of the country, in the city of St. John's for example, the population has more than doubled in the last 20 years; yet our people today still have to put up with the same postal service they had 20 years ago when the city was only half the size it is today. To my mind, in this day and age, this is not good enough. To the credit of the minister and the government, I note that they have already announced plans to build a new postal station in the northwest area of my city. That, however, will not be sufficient to fulfil the very serious needs of our people for postal service in my city. These can only be remedied by the building of another postal station to service the northeast area of my city which is one of the fastest growing sections in population and area.

The Canadian Postmasters Association has expressed concern to me, as I know it has to many members of parliament. The postmasters are demoralized. They are concerned about their future. They are concerned over the announcement by the minister of the government's intention to close down approximately 3,500 postal stations across the country. According to the Newfoundland branch of the Postmasters Association this will probably mean the closing down of some 300 postal stations. Until some definitive action is taken in this regard the postmasters who have been working for years for a mere pittance, but who have nevertheless provided the service, find their careers now in jeopardy; they find themselves without a future. How are the little people who have been served by these post offices to be provided service? It will be many years before the service by satellite ever reaches many parts of the country, particularly many parts of rural Newfoundland.

I say it is about time the Postmaster General or the Minister of Communications as he is now known should take seriously his responsibilities as Postmaster General. There is still a very serious need to deliver the mail efficiently and effectively in this country. If the minister does not want to take our word for it I suggest that he speak to the people across the country and check with members

[Mr. McGrath.]

of parliament on all sides of the house who receive complaints from all over the country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. I must advise the hon. member that his time has expired.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I can complete my remarks in one or two minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Does the house give unanimous consent for the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. McGrath: In closing may I say that the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) is progressive enough to be very familiar with the need to engage in the satellite and telecommunications activity, but is also conservative enough to recognize the need to maintain a good postal service in this country.

Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few remarks concerning the deplorable manner in which the Post Office Department of this country is being administered. In the short period of 10½ months since the Postmaster General assumed the portfolio, there has been a continuing deterioration and erosion of postal services in the entire country. He has stated all along it is his intention to modernize the Post Office Department, to make it more efficient. He stated that he intended to apply certain business management principles to the administration of the Post Office Department. This he stated, would enable it to serve the public better. Yet, if the changes of the past few months are any indication of how the Post Office Department intends to better serve the public, I predict that before the next election the Pony Express will be handling the mails again.

We heard 30 minutes of whining from the Postmaster General and sneering at the opposition. He blamed the previous Conservative government for all the problems he has today. It would seem to be a habit of ministers to blame the opposition for the various problems they face. The Postmaster General is blaming the previous Conservative government for the gross inefficiency in the Post Office Department today. A month or two ago, before the standing committee on housing, the ex-minister of transport blamed the opposition for his inability to remove the 11 per cent sales tax on building materials. That was a little ridiculous. We have a government with a clear majority in the house trying to blame