

*Post Office*

Toronto with the postal employees—there has been a very great development in consultation and sensitivity as between labour and management.

The government has kept a very close eye on this department in the realization that there must be sensitivity and that many people who are employed are not skilled workers and have great fears about innovation and new technology. The government realizes that these people must be dealt with, that it must understand the situation, that they must be cared for and paid a decent wage.

I think the minister's initiative since he has taken over this portfolio speaks well for him as a representative of this government. I know he has travelled across this country and has spoken not only to management but also to the postal workers. I do not think I can accept what the hon. member for Victoria-Haliburton said a few moments ago about the minister being interested in other things. The hon. member made an attack on the department as being a place where someone could be shoved down in cabinet seniority or as a place which could be used for the purpose of paying someone off. We do not think of it in that way. He may have those suspicions. I am surprised he has that idea in his mind.

One of the most important means of communication in our country is being carried out responsibly. I believe the minister's record is one of real involvement with and sensitivity toward the people. We have seen consultation develop as never before. We have seen real innovation. We have seen a minister involved with both management and labour. We have seen new methods. We have seen new centres developed. We have even seen the introduction of stamps to promote Canada. I do not see that as a threat to the monarchy—and no one could have a more British background than I have. I have great pride in our heritage and in our country. I think it is time we all recognized this.

The real demand upon modern government is to cope quickly. We do not have time to stand back and give total reflection. We do not always have time to try something for a year and then do it; we must move quickly. I do not think anyone who takes on the responsibility of running government today would dare say we can do it perfectly or that we can be sure we are doing it properly. I do think, however, that we can say this is a direction we want to take, that we will try it and when we make mistakes we will correct them.

**Mr. Paul Yewchuk (Athabasca):** Mr. Speaker, we have just heard a prolonged Liberal apology full of paradoxes. The hon. member for York West (Mr. Fleming) said it is easy to knock something, and I agree. He seemed to spend a good deal of his time knocking the opposition. However, I do not remember him making any suggestions concerning how the postal service could be improved. On the one hand he said that the service had deteriorated, and on the other hand he said it is the best in the world. Then he went on to portray the usual attitude of his government, of complacency and self-satisfaction in telling the Canadian people they should get used to the situation because they cannot have everything they want. The suggestion is that the people must be happy with the difficulties they are experiencing. The government deals with this situation in the same way it dealt with the unemployment situation,

[Mr. Fleming.]

by saying that because of the difficulties in this country it is impossible to improve things and people must live with the situation.

I do not think that is what we want members on the government side to tell us. We want them to tell us what they are doing in an effort to improve services for the Canadian people, services which are costing the Canadian people more. With this in mind I shall discuss a particular area of difficulty in respect of postal service. I have in mind the isolated communities of northern Canada, such as the northern part of my province, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon territory. I believe the vastness of my riding is fairly typical of the northern regions about which I wish to speak.

In his remarks the minister spent a good deal of time bragging about the tremendous new machinery in the Post Office, such as automatic letter sorters, automatic secretaries and automatic everything. However, he did not impress me very much because these automatic things are in Toronto, Montreal and other large centres. Places such as Peerless Lake, Graham Lake, Red Earth, Little Buffalo or similar places in the north still have not reached the pony express stage of postal service. As a matter of fact many of these areas do not have any postal service at all. I find some humour in hearing members from Toronto or Montreal say that they do not like having the postal service reduced from six days to five days a week, when a place like Peerless Lake does not have service on any day of the week. This is an area which I believe really requires attention. However, it has not been receiving attention.

The motion before us deals with the deterioration of postal service. I am sorry I cannot talk about that matter in respect of the areas I have mentioned because there was no postal service to begin with; therefore it cannot deteriorate. I shall try to convince the minister that he should introduce service into these isolated communities so that the people there would at least be in a position to communicate with him through the mail. These isolated settlements are separated by great distances. In some areas there are post offices from place to place, but in most cases part of the problem is that there are no roads or very poor roads. Another problem in these regions is that there are very few motor vehicles. In many cases the people still use horse and wagon or, if you like, ponies.

Places like Peerless Lake, Graham Lake and Red Earth are about 200 miles north of Lesser Slave Lake. About two years ago there was no post office in that area. One was set up at Red Earth. That post office was to serve the whole region, covering a radius of about 100 miles. The minister in a letter to me recently said with great pride that the post office had been set up at Red Earth, that it was tremendous and that it served the people of the whole region. It could be, in Toronto, Montreal or in any of the other areas where people have motor vehicles and paved highways, that having to travel 20, 30 or 40 miles to mail a letter or pick up mail might be acceptable; but in an isolated community with no roads and with horses for transportation the situation is very different when one wishes to pick up mail, mail a letter, send a postal money order or carry on any other postal business.

When the minister tells me that his department is now modernized, I say to him that this does not impress me. He