

Saturday Service To Go?

By Grant McGuinty

Residents of Russell, Embrum, Metcalfe, Greely and other rural areas face an abrupt end to Saturday postal service if a federal government proposal is followed through. Such a move would mean an annual loss of \$2 million in salaries and hundreds of part-time jobs for rural residents across the country.

Russell postmaster Pierre Robinson said the Postmaster Association is staunchly opposed to such a move. "We're going to fight to keep Saturday service open. The association is going to tell the public what is going on and what the consequences of no Saturday service will be," said Robinson.

Other groups in Russell have also taken affirmative action against the government proposal. The Russell Senior Citizen Club has formed a petition and is calling for the signatures of people who oppose the discontinuation of Saturday service.

The Russell Village Women's Institute has started a petition and plans to submit the signatures to local Member of Parliament Denis Ethier. The group will also send personal letters to the Postmaster-General of Canada, John Fraser, and call for the end of such a move.

If rural post offices are closed on Saturdays revenue will decrease. All post offices are graded according to the amount of incoming and outgoing mail. An office handling a large volume of mail is given a high grade and more money is allotted to the office. This money is used to pay salaries and to hire part-time workers.

"The difference between a grade four and grade five is about \$1,000 annually. If postal service is shut down on Saturday this office in Russell will go from grade five to grade 4. A decrease in that large amount of money will mean

less part-time workers and more unemployment for the area," said Robinson.

An alternative to Saturday service is to set up sub-offices — small stations that are often found in shopping malls — and deal with minor needs such as money orders, stamps, and outgoing mail. But such a station in Russell and other counties would lose money because of lack of business, according to Robinson.

Bertha Smith, president of the Russell Senior Citizens Club, said the end of Saturday service to the Russell area would be detrimental in many ways. "A Saturday morning trot to the post office is a way of life in the rural community. It's part of life, a longtime tradition in Russell," said Smith.

"Many people living in Russell go to Ottawa to work for the day and most of them don't get home before 6 p.m., the time the post office closes, so they make a special trip down on Saturdays. People will have to pick up their mail in Ottawa and that would be a terrible inconvenience," said Mrs. Smith.

Eileen Hamelin, president of Russell Village Women's Institute, has more than 30

signatures of the group's petition form and is expecting more. "No more Saturday service will cause unemployment in the area and something should be done about it. Not too many people may think much about it now but just wait until it closes, then people will realize they should have done something about it," said Hamelin.

David Carter, manager of public affairs for Eastern Ontario postal district, claims the closure of Saturday postal service has been experimented with in the Peterborough rural area. "We've had no outcry from the public, little comment, and no protestation at all. No one seems to miss the service," said Carter.

When the federal post office department introduces a move to the Eastern Ontario area it will be asking for comments from people living in the area.

"We would pay attention to protest and disapproval. If there is plenty of it, in all likelihood offices would stay open on Saturdays. We're not wholesale closing, we're just closing offices that don't have heavy mail traffic," concluded Carter.



Russell Post Office part-time employee Bessie Honey sorts letters for Russell residents. If plans to close rural post offices go through, Bessie and part-time employees like her won't be working on Saturdays.

Where's the Weather?

It's been a strange winter Russell's Man For All Seasons, Jim Kidd, volunteer weather observer for Environment Canada, says there hasn't been that much to observe.

Day after day, the same story. Bright sunshine, a few drifting flakes now and then, the ground barely covered with a light coat of somewhat discouraged snow.

"Call this winter!" Jim humpes. "We haven't had what you'd call a real winter. This is the banana belt."

Jim has words of warning for

farmers. Crops such as winter wheat and alfalfa have probably suffered severe winter kill, — he says.

Spring bulbs, shrubs and trees, he maintains, are protected by earth "and we have not had warm enough temperatures to start them growing."

Russell's weather expert is looking for more snow in February. In the previous two winters on record similar to this one, big snow came in February providing six weeks of business for winter resorts and sports promoters.

The current winter has no equal going back twenty years and apparently, the federal records for snow cover don't go back beyond that. Everybody remembers the big snowfalls, but few people remember winters of little snow.

There was little snow in 1950, but the record was not preserved. In 1964-65 and 1965-66, there was little snow before February and quite a lot after. In 1965-66, there were four inches on the ground at Christmas, matched only Jan. 23 this winter.



George Browne passes away

George Thomas Browne, former Russell drover, slaughter house operator, and butcher, passed away at Winchester Feb. 2.

Mr. Browne, 90, was spry and active until a brief illness one week before his death. He had resided during the past several years at a Winchester nursing home. Mr. Browne was born in Russell, Aug. 25, 1980.

He is survived by son Ralph, Victoria, B.C., and daughter Willa, Lanigan, Sask., as well as brother Lawrence, Russell, and sisters Mary and Elvira, both of Ottawa. He was interred at Springhill Cemetery, Feb. 5, following a funeral at Metcalfe.

Castor Chatter



Greely area parents can now hire certified babysitters. They're qualified in that they've taken a course, developed by the Canadian Safety Council, and provided by the Greely unit of the Osgoode Township Fire Department. The 18 young students of the fine art of babysitting followed seven lectures covering a range of topics including child care, child safety, child behavior, first aid, games to play, rights and responsibilities of both sitter and employer, and handling emergencies. A list of super sitters is contained in the current edition of Greely Ratepayer's News.

There's no danger of the Russell Fair shifting its emphasis to entertainment away from agricultural exhibits. The consensus at a recent meeting of the agricultural society was that the annual fair should remain a showcase for farm production. Hear, hear!

Religious barriers were cast aside Jan. 27 when Osgoode Township residents got together at Greely's new Parkway Road Pentecostal Church for an ecumenical service. The response was so good it was "shocking", says Castor Valley Baptist minister Jim Paul; so many people came out for the service that many had to be turned away. Rev. Paul was one of several ministers invited to assist at the service, hosted by Rev. Clair Mullen. Roman Catholic Bishop John Beahan gave the sermon. Rev. Paul praises the new Pentecostal Church to the heavens.

Natural gas will be available to Russell and Osgoode township residents within the next two years. There's no truth to the rumor the gas will be produced during township council meetings.

Fire Chief's report

By Norman Inglis

In late 1979 the Russell Volunteer Fire Department, upon the retirement of chief James Eadie, elected the following new officers:

Norman Inglis — Fire Chief, 445-2934.

Irvin Sunstrum — Deputy Fire Chief and Training Officer, 445-3006.

Cliff Cullen — Fire Prevention Officer, 445-5231.

Last year the Fire Department began an inspection program under the direction of Milton Ruttle and most of the homes in the rural areas were inspected with reference to wood burning appliances, and installation of smoke detectors. Under Mr. Cullen's guidance a new inspection program is being set up, and we will be inspecting residential and commercial buildings within the village very soon.

One area of concern to us is the recent revival of wood burning stoves and furnaces. Installed and maintained properly these units are a source of safe, cheap heat for your home. Misuse and improper installation can create a serious fire hazard. In the past two heating seasons we have had several calls to extinguish fires that have been a direct result of either the stove or the chimney. If you have installed or are planning to install a wood fired furnace we are more than willing to inspect the unit, and supply any information you need for its safe operation.

Volunteer fire departments for years have had the nicknamed "foundation savers", and it is not an easy "handle" to shake. However, our local governments have seen the need for better fire protection services, and in the past few years we have acquired a great deal of new equipment. This along with new training methods has resulted in a much more efficient department, and I feel the

residents of the Castor area now have some of the best fire protection services available in any rural community.

We now carry a staff of 19 volunteers, most of whom unfortunately work in Ottawa during the day. This could possibly leave us short-handed if we receive a fire call in the daytime. I would like to invite anyone to call me who is available during the day to help out in case we are short-handed.

"ALPHA" nets \$270,000 haul

Project "Alpha" netted some \$270,000 in stolen goods, according to OPP figures. Total amounts involved will come to over \$1 million.

In "Alpha", OPP undercover agents located in a farmhouse on County Road 17, between Embrum and 417, let word get around that they were in the market for stolen property. Results exceeded their expectations.

Yeggs and crooks from as far away as Kingston took advantage of the cash terms, no-questions-asked offer of the undercover cops. One man even brought in a stolen tractor-trailer and was promptly charged.

In all, according to Cons. George Barre, community service officer of the Casselman detachment, some \$270,000 in stolen goods, including autos, appliances, TV sets and drugs were tracked down.

Some 399 charges of possession were laid, involving some 31 men. Fraud, theft, credit cards, weapons and probation charges were the basis of additional charges. Fifteen charges of possession and trafficking in narcotics were laid, involving thirteen men and two women.

PTA Meeting

An introductory meeting of the Parent-Teacher Association will be held Feb. 19, 8 p.m., at Ste. Catherine school. There'll be a guest speaker and all parents are welcome. A social hour will follow.

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