

Post Office Act

running the risk of being accused of discrimination. It would be impracticable and inequitable to set rates favouring particular types of organizations without extending the same privilege to all other organizations whose members may claim that their activities are of benefit to the public at large.

Because of these repercussions and the difficulties the Postmaster General would face in trying to set rates for certain organizations, we take this position. This matter has nothing to do with the law, because third-class rates are not statutory but are set as a result of a ruling by the Postmaster General. For this reason I have asked for an opportunity to study the matter. As recently as today one of my officials had a meeting with representatives of these groups in an attempt to come to grips with the problem. As I said before, I am not too optimistic about the decision we will make.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the points the Postmaster General (Mr. Côté) has made—and I am happy to call him that—but it seems to me he has not been as convincing as he may believe. I may say initially that the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) spoke at some length on this matter at second reading of the bill and set out our position. It is not my intention to go into this at length, but I am brought to my feet by one or two things the Postmaster General has just said.

First, may I say I note with interest that around the chamber there are a number of copies of the salmon coloured booklet on this matter. This is a copy of a submission to the Postmaster General. I think it is fair to say that we all take into consideration the nature of the organizations which make representations to us from time to time. When we receive a document supported jointly by the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled, the Canadian Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases Association and the key tag service of the War Amputees of Canada, we treat it very seriously. I appreciate the fact that the minister has done so as well.

As I understood the minister, the principle worry on his part is that it would be too heavy a responsibility for his department to make a value judgment in respect of each organization which might apply for a special rate. It seems to me that this submission has dealt with that point in a paragraph on the second page, which I might be permitted to put on the record. It reads as follows:

In previous discussions, Post Office officials have stated that they cannot accept responsibility to determine which charitable institutions should qualify for concessions. This does not seem reasonable, as all such institutions are registered with the federal government and must file annual financial statements. Some difficulty in deciding eligibility for special rates is inevitable but it is not insurmountable. In this respect, the Post Office Department already has established machinery to decide upon categories for second class mailings. A similar procedure could no doubt be adopted, using an acceptable set of standards to determine which organizations could qualify for rates allowable to those in the special category.

I quite agree that it would be too much to ask the Postmaster General or the Post Office Department to make a value judgment in respect of every individual

[Mr. Côté (Longueuil).]

organization, but it does seem to me it is possible for categories to be defined and for standards to be set and then let the chips fall where they may. The hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) who proposed this motion has suggested a definition that narrows the field considerably from the 35,000 organizations mentioned, and I think what he has proposed should be looked at very seriously.

● (9:40 p.m.)

I appreciate the point the Postmaster General made to the effect that this is something which comes under his authority and that it does not need to be put in the statute. I suppose the answer to that is that so long as it is under his authority and he is prepared to make the decision, we are stuck with his statement that he is not very optimistic. We know what that means.

Mr. Barnett: A nice polite way of saying—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): A nice polite way of saying no. I think, therefore, it would be better if the House expressed itself by supporting the amendment of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris, and we intend to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is on motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the said motion will please say yea.

Some hon. Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 75(11), the recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred.

In accordance with the special order made earlier today we will now proceed to the consideration of motions Nos. 3 and 4, which will be considered together.

The hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) moves motion No. 3 as follows:

That Bill C-240, an act to amend the Post Office Act, be amended by deleting clause 3, lines 23 to 41 at page 3 and lines 1 to 27 at page 4.