

Post Office Act

come through with—the establishment of a special category for non-profit, voluntary organizations providing health and welfare services and, second, that he set up standards or criteria under which organizations like these could qualify for a special mailing rate. I think the minister should reply to these requests tonight. He should separate the profit-making, junk mail artists from organizations that are doing a real service to the Canadian public.

This is the point on which I wished to speak tonight. We should not indulge in any more slaughtering of voluntary, non-profit groups such as occurred in respect of numerous publications when the previous postal increase came into effect.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to delay the passage of this bill but I have a few words to say about it.

Mr. Speaker, we are faced with an increase in postal rates which had been announced quite a while ago. We are aware of the fact that the Post Office is getting deeper and deeper into deficit and that it will keep sliding down unless something is done to correct the situation. According to the figures I have here, the Post Office deficit presently amounts to \$113 million and it will get even worse in the years to come unless we regain control of the situation.

I wish to express my admiration for the minister who did everything he could and cannot be held responsible for these increases and for the problems facing the Post Office. The minister did a good job, with the means available to him, to correct quite a number of anomalous situations and we appreciate his work. For all he has done, we express our admiration, but much remains to be done.

Mr. Speaker, if postal services decrease and costs increase, there surely is something wrong somewhere. The people are getting less and less service. I shall not dwell on the subject at length for my colleagues have already spoken about it.

With regard to those services, I mailed letters in my riding that were delivered three weeks later. Like the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) I too asked for a report on the matter, and received good ones. I can only praise the postal employees who, in general, perform their duties well, but the mail took two or three weeks to cover a distance of roughly 300 miles. That is not normal. There is certainly something wrong. I blame the delay not on the carelessness of the minister but rather on certain civil servants who do not do their jobs properly, who do not take their responsibilities seriously where mail delivery is concerned.

But there are other responsibilities, of much greater significance, which are far from being properly assumed by civil servants, and this tends to increase operating costs and hence the cost of living generally. As for senior officials, I have something to say about them and I think I have already told the minister. Now I am not criticizing the minister, but I suggest he should consider straighten-

ing out the situation. Inquiries should be made because senior officials are terribly expensive to the Post Office.

Some officials are not discharging their responsibilities by a long shot. This I am saying quite frankly: they are wasting public money. I will give hon. members evidence of it, but without going into details for it would be too lengthy and would cause a public scandal.

In my riding, for instance, they first closed down the post office four years ago before building a new one. Floor space was rented elsewhere to house the post office. Since then, plans were made, tenders were called and withdrawn, in short, they changed their minds about seven or eight times. The fact remains that the post office building is closed. It could have been kept open to the public. Therefore, for the last three years, we have had to pay rent to house the post office elsewhere. It is terribly costly to the department and even if there were three or four sets of plans made and as many calls for tenders, none was accepted, all have been rejected to consider something else again.

● (9:40 p.m.)

That issue has been pending for three years now and has probably cost thousands of dollars to the department. It is not really the Post Office Department that is responsible, but the Department of Public Works, because the latter is responsible for the construction of buildings. Delays of this sort, for one reason or another, are inexcusable. Then, when information is asked for, one is told that bids will be called next week. This has been repeated for two years. One is told: They will be called next month; you can announce it in the newspapers, it is certain, the decisions have been made. But three years later, the decisions are still pending.

Therefore, I blame the civil servants who do this sort of thing, or the Department of Public Works, as this increases the operating cost of the postal service. We are debating today a proposal for an increase in the postal rates because of all sorts of things of this nature. I could say a lot more on the subject.

I know many other things, but I shall not say more tonight. I would not want a public scandal.

All kinds of factors contribute to increase postal rates and hence the cost of living. And this is done everywhere. If it is done on a national scale in Canada, you can imagine how much it costs.

So, I ask the minister to work in co-operation with the Department of Public Works responsible for the construction of post offices. So the minister can certainly act, and ask for investigations. There are certainly some way to save, so that the people will pay reasonable rates. I repeat that senior officials are not serious, and do not fulfill their duty as they should, that is honestly and fairly. I do not condemn in any way the minister for this increase of postal rates.

As a conclusion to my remarks, I shall not go into details, because many other speakers have done so. I only meant to ask the minister to conduct serious investigations so that these abuses may end some day, that we may have more justice, and that the department might

[Mrs. MacInnis.]