

insist that this basic means of communication realize a profit?

Even in this Parliament we maintain parliamentary mailing privileges to ensure maximum communication between representatives and constituents. We have come a long way from the penny Post Office and I hope that the prognostication made in Winnipeg the other day, of 26 cents to mail a letter within nine years, will not be realized. Tonight I should like to hear how the Postmaster General intends to avoid this very undesirable situation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marcel Lessard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for Brandon-Souris for raising this question. Unfortunately, when he did so, the minister was not allowed to reply in the House because of certain allegations. But I can assure the hon. member that it is my pleasure to reply tonight since the minister and his parliamentary secretary are not in attendance.

I would like to advise the hon. member that the Post Office Department has of course no idea of how much it will cost to deliver a first class letter within the next nine, 10 or 20 years.

The amount of 26 cents has been mentioned. Perhaps we shall reach this amount but probably not for many years.

But I would like to point out to the hon. member that there is a huge difference between what it costs the Post Office for the handling of a letter and the proportion of that cost that will eventually be paid by the user. The government's present policy—I insist upon that—does not imply that the Post Office will necessarily pay its way. The honourable member emphasized that point. We may be sure the department does not necessarily intend to pay its way.

I do not know what will be the government's policy in 1990, Mr. Chairman, but last year the Post Office implemented measures to prevent an excessive increase in costs and consequently in the deficit. The first of those measures is of course the Postal code and the mechanization programme which Mr. Fultz referred to the other day in his Winnipeg statement.

The mechanization programme will help to reduce mail handling thereby reducing the cost of such handling. We hope that the use of the postal code will be general by July, 1974. The guaranteed postal delivery program also will reduce expenditures while easing the pressures being exerted on the postal services during peak hours, as well as ensure a better use of both personnel and facilities. Besides, expect the creation of new postal facilities in Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal, when these are entirely automated, costs will be maintained at a reasonable level.

The work to be done in the field of commercialization, which has been mentioned so often, will boost postal revenues in encouraging the use of the "postpack", promoting the philatelic service sales and developing the small parcels service and the use of containers, thus reducing handling costs.

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

• (10:20 p.m.)

[English]

I should like to assure the hon. gentleman with regard to the other point he raised in his presentation. I will certainly bring this matter to the attention of the minister and he will take care of it in due course.

**Mr. Dinsdale:** Just keep the cost down. That's the thing that worries me.

AGRICULTURE—FARM MACHINERY—FEDERAL ASSISTANCE TO PRAIRIE PROVINCES IN TESTING PROGRAM

**Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) this question:

In view of the fact that the three prairie governments are co-operating on a farm machinery testing program, as recommended by Professor Barber, have those three provinces approached the Minister of Agriculture for assistance in this regard? If not, what will his answer be if they do approach him?

The minister answered to the effect that there have been a number of discussions about this. I suggest that it is not enough to appoint a royal commission that has done a wonderful job. I suggest that there comes a time when you must do something about the recommendations that the commission has made to the government. If the Minister of Agriculture intends to do anything about those recommendations, he is surely taking his time.

We can see that the provincial governments are considering co-operating in this regard. I ask the minister this evening whether the federal government will contribute any money towards a farm machinery testing program, as recommended by Professor Barber. May I read a small excerpt from Professor Barber's report. His royal commission was a creature of the federal government. In that sense I think he speaks with authority, the authority of the government. I read as follows from page 3 of the report of the Royal Commission on Farm Machinery:

With farming much more highly mechanized, the farmer has also found himself more vulnerable to the effects of machine breakdown during his busy seasons—in particular during seeding operations in the spring, during the haying season, and at harvest time.

At page 10 the report reads:

Yet as machines become larger and more expensive, a farmer's machinery-investment decisions become increasingly critical. It is for this reason that this report includes a recommendation for an evaluation and testing unit that could supply farmers with much more reliable and comprehensive information to help them make their decisions on machinery investment and replacement.

A little further on Professor Barber suggests that people who are in a position to judge farm machinery are under pressure from farm machinery companies. He was thinking of newspapers and universities which receive advertisements and grants from farm machinery companies. That is why they are not in a position to make known critical evaluations of how farm machinery works. Professor Barber suggested that logically the government ought to set up a unit to look into this particular problem. The Barber report says at page 495:

In an earlier section of this report . . . it was pointed out that the benefits that had been derived from improvements in farm machinery technology in the past were extremely large. Indeed,