

not going to comment at any length on the committee report which was concurred in last week. As the hon. member for Brandon-Souris pointed out, if the matter has not yet been brought before the courts, it is my understanding that it may be soon.

Mr. Dinsdale: It is before the Ontario Supreme Court now.

Mr. Young: I have been informed by the hon. member that it is before the courts. In that case, for me to comment further would be wrong since, I take it, the matter is sub judice.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Don't give us that.

Mr. Young: It is generally taken that one does not comment on matters which are before the court. If the postal rates are being challenged—and I gather a challenge may be coming from the Periodical Publishers' Association—I think we will await the advice of the court and the decision of the very able people who sit on the bench. I am quite prepared to leave it to the court to make that decision.

In closing my remarks tonight let me remind the House that the hon. member for Brandon-Souris spoke about the service performed by the Post Office today. We have all heard the stories and humorous anecdotes about that service, and I am sure that on some occasion or other we may all have been looking for a letter which might have taken a day or two longer to arrive. Some people these days are fond of trying to compare the Post Office to the pony express. I want to point out to the hon. member for Brandon-Souris, because I see him smiling, that I came across an interesting fact and some interesting figures some weeks ago. At the time when the pony express operated—I believe it was at the turn of the century; I am not quite that old to remember that far back, but perhaps the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre might help me there—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): At the turn of which century?

Mr. Young: I took it the hon. member was referring to the most recent century. I heard that it cost about \$25 to send a letter by pony express from one side of the continent to the other, and it could take anywhere from three weeks to a month for the letter to reach its destination. If that is true, I think that some of the humorous anecdotes do not describe the situation sufficiently accurately. I would like to ask that those who bandy about those stories should also compare the value of \$25 at that time to what it is today. Would it be \$75 to \$100 in today's monetary terms? I do not know exactly. For that same letter to go through the Canadian postal system, as some six billion letters do, crossing six time zones, we pay 14 cents for a first class letter.

● (1752)

Mr. Dinsdale: It is 28 cents including the deficit.

Mr. Young: Well, it is 14 cents for the person who buys the stamp. I suppose we all share in the deficit.

Post Office

I will conclude at this point in order for some of my colleagues to expand further on the recent rate increase.

Hon. Martin O'Connell (Scarborough East): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada (Mr. Young) set out the position of the government very well. Further debate in the House is not likely to produce many results regarding the legality or alleged illegality of the postal rate increase. The government received advice. The matter is now before the courts. No useful purpose will be served by continuing the debate on the legal issue. Personally I believe the government had the legal right to do what it did.

The public is less interested in the postal rate increase to 14 cents, since it is not out of line with the rates charged in other countries. They are really interested, however, in the service the Post Office is able to deliver at this stage of its development. Many of us are as concerned as the public with the quality of this service.

The Post Office is a federal institution which is facing a crisis. It is not difficult to understand why that is so; this federal institution has had a long history of neglect by the public and particularly by governments. That neglect was overcome in the last ten years or less. The Post Office in fact has gone through a massive transformation which has resulted in inside turmoil and difficulties in its service to the public.

Approximately ten years ago, collective bargaining came to the Post Office, as it did to other federal institutions within the public service. I am referring to the Post Office as an institution which employs one out of every five public servants. In fact, the Post Office has some 63,000 employees. It is a massive institution into which the collective bargaining procedure was introduced for the first time. At the time collective bargaining was introduced, the working conditions in the Post Office were poor, the wages were exceptionally low, and a military style of administration and management existed, if I can put it that way. Therefore, one would expect that employees would use collective bargaining to better their positions. They were perfectly entitled to do so.

Also, the facilities of the Post Office have been starved of capital for decades by successive governments. Not only were the working conditions poor inside those facilities, but the facilities themselves were poor and employees could not cope with them because of the millions of pieces of mail they were expected to deliver. Thus, service was breaking down, and morale and working conditions were poor.

The transformation is still going on at the present time. A new postal code was introduced. Industrialization was introduced into the operations of the Post Office. Also, mechanization on a massive scale was experienced. For example, there are three letter mechanized sorting plants in Toronto and other parts of the country today. Anyone who goes into one of those plants will appreciate that people are no longer handling the mail. Instead, machines are handling it. The work force has been industrialized to that extent. Thus, a major changeover in