

*Post Office*

motions or by asking permission of the House tomorrow or the day after to have it included in *Hansard*?

**Mr. Blais:** Mr. Speaker, the information the hon. gentleman requests is very detailed. I can tell him that this is the first time in the history of new rate proposals that the total rate structure for all classes of mail is being changed upward. As I indicated, the increase for first-class mail is 2 cents, likewise for third-class, addressed mail; and for second-class mail the increase ranges between 24 per cent and 25 per cent. That is for publishers' mail, publications, newspapers, etc., which come within the second-class classification. The hon. gentleman will recognize that there is a very wide range of rate changes in each one of the classifications, and it is very difficult for me to start analysing each and every increase for the benefit of hon. members. I thought it would be more informative for me to make available to hon. members and to the public generally the exact nature of those rate increases by way of a press release.

In terms of the question of deficits in the various classes, here again the deficits vary in accordance with the individual rate which is being sought. As the hon. gentleman knows, in terms of second-class postage it is a highly subsidized rate. The Post Office has been carrying the can as part of government policy in terms of printed material and the distribution of published material, including daily newspapers and weeklies. We are incurring deficits which we can properly identify, but with some difficulty, as the hon. gentleman might well imagine. We are trying to minimize the deficit in terms of first-class mail, but as I indicated in my address, a deficit is still going to be experienced.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre referred very impolitely to commercial mail. I call it advertising mail. It is revenue-producing and it is generally on a cost recovery basis save and except in those areas where we are still competing and trying to increase our market. We are doing that as a business initiative to attempt to enter to a greater extent into that particular market in order to increase our revenue in the long term.

I do not want to elaborate too much. I am sure the hon. gentleman will have on his desk tomorrow the press release giving the specific increases in rates for all the various classes of mail.

**Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands):** One of the features which disturbs people, in addition to the cost of mail, is the whole question of the confidentiality of mail. I wonder why the minister has not made a statement on motions similar to the statement he made to the press last week in which he said the Post Office had lost control of the issue because no one in the Ottawa headquarters knew of the collaboration with the RCMP. He went on to make a great many other statements, which I will not bother to quote at this time. But it seems to me this whole question is something on which the minister ought to have made a statement at some time.

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands).]

**Mr. Speaker:** That is a valiant effort to raise another subject. However, I think it falls outside the ambit of this particular statement by the minister. The hon. member for Nickel Belt.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the Postmaster General admitted that his department miscalculated in terms of electronic funds transfers, and in view of the fact that electronic communication is certainly changing the whole aspect of mail service, can the minister tell the House what studies have been undertaken, or if there have been any, by his highly paid bureaucrats with respect to the future of communications in this country? Because we have already invested \$1 billion in machinery to move mail quickly, can the minister tell the House whether there are any studies, and is he prepared to table the studies so that members of parliament can see the great forecasting of his department?

**Mr. Blais:** Mr. Speaker, I thought the hon. member for Nickel Belt was interested in the Post Office. If he were, he would surely have seen a number of public statements I have made. I flatter myself in believing that the hon. member for Brandon-Souris reads every speech that I make. He quotes from them widely. I would have hoped the hon. member for Nickel Belt would have been doing the same. Evidently he has not. I have said on a number of occasions that we are, indeed, concerned about EFTS, and we are monitoring activities not only to ascertain how EFTS is proceeding but also to ascertain the vulnerability of the Post Office.

If I might be permitted, I would like to use the hon. member as a channel to some of his friends—who are not in this House but with whom I have dealings, although not as cordial as the dealings I have with my hon. friend—to advise them that EFTS is a serious threat. The hon. member recognizes that it is a serious threat and that we can lose, not 70 per cent of our volume, which would indeed be fatal, but up to 40 per cent of our volume unless we can obtain the co-operation of the CUPW membership. I have said that quite often. I have recognized that mechanization is a process which is irreversible. I have recognized that any increase in productivity has to be shared with the workers. The hon. member has agreed with me on that.

Having said that, and having recognized the intentions of the Post Office, I ask the hon. member to solicit the co-operation of CUPW so that we can improve our services, increase our efficiency and identify those areas where we can accelerate our service in order to compete effectively and efficiently with the electronics media. This media includes digital computer transfer of messages, EFTS and other electronic means of communications which are now taking great amounts of the potential earnings of the Post Office. That interference with our revenue has been aided in the past not by just one union but by the general labour relations atmosphere in the Post Office, which I have been trying with every effort to correct since my appointment. I have been successful with reference to all but one of the major unions within the Post Office.