

*Post Office Act*

have it lie in the Summerside post office undelivered from Friday evening until some time on Monday. What Mr. Kierans is proposing—and what he will undoubtedly get away with—is less service at higher rates.

The government is doing a great job of cutting expenditures and slashing services. We doubt that most people will feel that this was the mandate given it on June 25.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that all hon. members have been receiving complaints and anxious inquiries from their constituents. Some veteran members of this chamber have told me they are receiving more mail about this matter than about any of the controversial issues of which this house has been seized in the last decade—and we have had some really sizzling issues—because this is a fundamental matter which touches all Canadians and there are reasons for concern.

Naturally people tend to ask why, when they are presented with a heavier bill for anything, and this bill does impose heavy gouges on the public, a 20 per cent increase in five cent letter mail and a 50 per cent increase in local first class mail. It may be said that if the minister gets his way he will have made the nickel obsolete. It is a long time since much could be bought for a nickel, but we used to be able to buy a stamp.

I note the minister's constant reference to the great bulk of mail as being business mail. But as my colleague sitting in front of me said, as he heard the minister's statement, "Who in the world keeps business going?" You always get back to that group of people collectively responsible for all of us sitting in this house. The increases for newspapers are in some cases higher than 300 per cent.

Not surprisingly this combination of decreased service and increased rates is an unpopular mixture and an unpalatable brew. But apart from the heavy bite which the public understands all too well, other questions are coming to the fore. How serious is the financial situation in the post office? It is a long time since I have heard anyone sing such a triumphant song from such a dismal score as the minister has succeeded in doing. He said that the deficit will escalate out of sight if something drastic is not done. I noted his reference to high labour costs. I cannot believe that labour is so heavily responsible for these rapidly escalating costs.

The white paper to which the minister referred and which was made available only on Friday, I believe, makes dreary reading. I

read it on Sunday. We continuing Presbyterians are very careful what we do on the Sabbath but we are allowed to read the Scriptures and are fond of the Old Testament. I thought that reading this white paper would not be different from reading about some of the tribulations of the Israelites, and my conscience was salved thereby. It is confusing reading.

I am not a cost accountant, or a former professor of economics as the minister is. I studied a great deal of economics and was always convinced that an ancient description of it as a dismal science was a very apt one. I found it a very dismal science. I found the white paper dismal. I found it pretty complex, pretty confusing. It is quite a demand to take a document of this kind, digest it by Monday, and then come along and say aye to the minister and have the bill shooed through.

Sir Robert Borden records that at the Paris peace conference the then president of Poland tabled a document which graphically illustrated the demographic pattern in Upper Silesia. Prime Minister Hughes, the outspoken prime minister of Australia, looked at it for a long time and then handed his copy back to Paderewski saying, "Perhaps you can play this on your piano but I'll be damned if I understand it." I do not share Prime Minister Hughes point of view but I can understand what he had in mind when he reacted in that way.

I looked at some of the statistics. As a result I wonder how ample is the explanation that is being given. I wonder how much farther advanced we are over where we were at the resolution stage. I would like to know what this expanded all-up service really means. This is dropped in as one of the little plums. Mail over eight ounces will now go all up. How many people will benefit? What does this mean? How big a bonanza is this?

I look at the deficit figures on first class mail alone. The deficit in 1968-69, without passage of these new rates, would be \$16,148,000. For the fiscal year 1969-70 it would rise to \$28,698,000 without the rate increases projected in this bill. These are vast and frightening figures, but how did they get that way so soon?

The ministers' predecessor said on June 2, 1967, as recorded at page 1098 of *Hansard*:

I can tell hon. members that at the five cent rate for letters we still make money. At four cents we still make some money although we are on the verge of losing.