

Post Office Act

yesterday afternoon, but it was also settled for me this morning when I heard the right hon. member for Prince Albert say that he wanted something taken out of committee. The right hon. member was referring to the committee dealing with the Biafra situation. He did not want it in the committee; he wanted it discussed here in this house because this is the supreme parliament. I am in complete accord with the right hon. member for Prince Albert.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, does the minister not realize that any committee report must come back to this house and must be decided upon by this supreme parliament?

Mr. Olson: Tell your colleagues so they will know, too.

Mr. Yewchuk: I wanted to clarify a point, Mr. Chairman. In the comments I made to the Postmaster General and hon. members of the house I was not complaining that the service had been cut down; I was complaining that when the new rates go into effect a newspaper will cost a resident of the north more than twice as much as it does now. My question was whether the Postmaster General would give special consideration to this group of people.

Mr. Kierans: Mr. Chairman, I think the question is very debatable. It is: Who is being subsidized here: Is it the person who buys a subscription to a newspaper, or is it the advertiser? The *Edmonton Journal* charges the people who live in Edmonton \$31.20 a year for buying that newspaper at the newsstand. They sell 135,000 out of their 145,000 copies on this basis. They charge people living outside their immediate delivery area—that is the other 10,353 subscribers—not \$31.20 but \$15. Why have they done this? They have done it because they have not had to pay the 2 per cent to the news vendor or the two cents per copy to the post office. They have paid us one third of a cent and one quarter of a cent. But our people, through rain, hail, sleet, snow and all weather conditions, deliver this newspaper on 312 or 315 days of the year. These people want to be paid, and all we are asking is the minimum 2 cents a copy, which is exactly what the *Edmonton Journal* gives to the people who sell the paper on a commission basis.

Our people refuse to subsidize this kind of activity any further, and I do not think the people of Canada expect this subsidy to be

[Mr. Kierans.]

borne by the 28,000 or 32,000 people who work among the 48,000 member family of the post office. I do not think the people of Canada expect this subsidy to be borne by those groups. If they wanted to pass on the whole increase, they would have to put up the subscription by \$17.39. This would bring it up to \$32.39. But people living throughout the north will get the newspaper delivered to them by aeroplane. There is a little additional cost involved in that.

I am not telling the proprietors of the *Edmonton Journal* how to run their business, but I imagine their decision will be something like this, "We will pass part of it on to the subscribers; maybe \$5, maybe \$10." It is still less than the normal price. Then they will say, "We will increase our advertising rates, because we want to keep these people on our circulation list." That is the whole basis of the exercise, so they can charge the kind of advertising rates to cover their circulation, but it will not all be passed on.

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the minister a very brief question. I might say, by way of explanation, that he stated that a number of rural post offices had been closed because the residents of the area were not using them and the revenue was very small. I know for a fact that many small post offices that have been closed in my area, particularly summer post offices, were used very extensively by the public; but the public brought the postage stamps with them from the city, from Toronto, Hamilton, or whatever city they came from, they received their mail at these post offices and mailed their letters from them, but in fact the record of the use of the post offices is not there. This is one of the complaints I have had in connection with the method of determining whether a post office is sufficiently used. I would like to ask the Postmaster General whether a check of incoming mail is made before a small post office is closed, in order to determine whether the post office is actually being used.

Mr. Kierans: In answer to the last question, yes, this is done. We make special arrangements by keeping post offices open during the summer months. With regard to the rest of the question, these people can always mail their letters. There are perfect facilities anyway, even if the post office or local revenue office is closed for receiving and mailing. Our way of judging this is by the number of people who use it to buy stamps, to send parcels or do whatever may be required.