

THE SERVICE REVIEWED.

House of Commons' Discussion of Post Office and Interior.

There have been a couple of discussions in the House of Commons recently that were well worth while. They took place in Committee of Supply, under whose rules the discussion is informal, and can easily be made informing. The Departments of Post Office and Interior were under review. The debates were taken part in by an unusually large number of members, and the discussion took a wide range. Of course, the talk was largely politics, which was quite natural seeing that all who took part in it were eminent politicians, but many points of interest to those who take an interest in the public service were brought out.

On Thursday, March 22, the Post Office was under review. The Postmaster General, Hon. T. Chase Casgrain, set out to make a statement of the affairs under his control. One entering the House after the debate had begun would hardly know that this was the idea, for the interruptions took up a good deal more time than did the main address. The Postmaster General and his hecklers seemed to understand one another, however, and the debate was kept along a general line, though fifty times it seemed to be in peril of becoming a mere wrangle about trifles. When Mr. Casgrain, with great skill and great patience, had at last succeeded in placing before the committee the facts and arguments of his case, the discussion took more the form of a debate and the case on the other side managed to get itself presented.

The subject nominally before the Chair was a vote of \$7,943,152.25 for the salaries and allowances of the Outside Service of the Post Office, but it was evidently used as an old-fashioned preacher used his text—as a point to start from. Mr. Casgrain's

work was to hold the committee as closely to the subject as he could.

Former criticisms of increasing expenditure were evidently kept in mind, for the Postmaster General's main point was that his administration had been not extravagant but economical. He contended that the increase in expenditure was not more than normal, taking the average increase of former years as a guide, but that had there been an unusual increase it would have been justified by the unusual work performed by the Department. The rapid extension of free rural mail delivery; the parcel post system; the necessary increases of salaries to employees and of allowances to railways; the work made necessary by the war; and the special developments in many cities as well as in distant parts of the country, all made for unavoidable increase of expenditure. He figured that the increases of salaries made in 1912, 1913 and 1914 amounted to \$600,000 a year. Mr. Casgrain stated that there are now 3,337 rural mail routes, and he expressed the confident opinion that Canada's system of rural mail delivery is more efficient than that of the United States, whose example we follow in establishing the system.

The discussion covered a multitude of local and petty details mainly of a political character. But the effect of the debate as a whole was to show a great postal system covering half a continent and performing its work efficiently everywhere. Whether in the financial centre of the great metropolis in Montreal, or in the frozen plains where the dog-sled is the only means of winter transport, in the midst of the carnage and turmoil of armed conflict, the work of the postman goes on steadily and without delay or error. And when the expense of this wonderful system is contrasted with the money that is wasted on works undertaken for merely political ends, the wonder is