

The honourable senator from Medicine Hat (Hon. Mr. Gershaw) complains that although there is a five-day week generally in his district, it has not been put into effect by the post office there. Another honourable senator pointed out in committee that the five-day week has not been put into effect in his district generally, but that the postal employees there have a five-day week. The Deputy Postmaster General stated this morning that if mistakes have been made the department would try to adjust them.

The question of the loss incurred in handling registered mail was inquired into this morning, after the matter was brought up by the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig). The Deputy Postmaster General said that, provided the volume of registered mail remained as at present, the service could be made self-sustaining if the fee were raised to thirty-five cents from the present fee of twenty cents. But he felt that if the fee were so increased there would follow such a reduced volume of registered mail that the loss would greatly increase. The department considers that at a fee of twenty cents it is getting a volume of mail on which the loss is as small as possible.

The Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig) suggests—I think this is the only conclusion we can come to from his remarks—that registration of mail should be done away with. Now, I do not think the people in this country are prepared to do away with the privilege or the right of registering their mail. I think that would be a mistake, and not practical. We must retain the right to register mail. If it cannot be done at a profit, we should keep the loss as small as possible.

The other matter which has been brought up is the cost of carrying newspapers. The honourable senator from Lethbridge (Hon. Mr. Buchanan) has pointed out that the big city dailies spend little money on postage, since most of them make deliveries by other means than the mails. It is the small dailies that use the mails.

Hon. Mr. Haig: The small weeklies.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: The small weeklies. I do not know if I was correct in saying that the dailies in small communities go through the mails, but I think some of them do. However, the great bulk of this business is derived from the rural papers. I was astonished to hear the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig) say that the small rural papers are largely gossip sheets. Some of those I have read are far from being gossip sheets. The men and women who edit these papers give considerable time and thought to the articles which appear in them, and

I do not think these papers should be destroyed through any act of ours. This morning, speaking in committee, the Deputy Postmaster General stated—and I think it has been confirmed by speakers this afternoon—that if these local papers are required to pay postage, practically all of them will go out of business. That may be so, although the honourable senator from Waterloo (Hon. Mr. Euler) and the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig) rather doubted it.

The honourable member from New Westminster (Hon. Mr. Reid) has made what to my mind is a very good suggestion, namely, that the whole question of where losses originate should receive further consideration.

Hon. Mr. Reid: It should be gone into fully.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: Yes: he proposes, I understand, that the inquiry should be undertaken by a committee, either of this house alone, or of members of both houses. Having listened to the arguments today, I agree that the matter should be looked into a little more fully. I feel that we should not, at least at this stage, risk the possibility of putting these small rural "locals" out of business. My recommendation is that the bill, in the form in which it is presented, and as approved by the committee, be now passed and if it is felt that further inquiry is desirable, let us have it. But I repeat, we should not, without further investigation, take action which will put these small papers out of circulation. I ask honourable senators to support the bill; and we will not let the whole subject drop there.

Hon. Mr. Euler: In my opinion, the loss referred to is occasioned, not so much by the carriage of the smaller newspapers as by the transport of other periodicals and publications which come under the designation of second-class mail. That is where the remedy should be looked for.

Hon. Mr. Haig: The honourable Leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Macdonald) said that I favour the abolition of registration of mail.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: I understood the honourable gentleman to suggest that registration should be done away with.

Hon. Mr. Haig: No. What I said was that the fees for registration should pay the cost of the registered mail service. That is all.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: That would make the cost so prohibitive that, for all practical purposes, it would be impossible.

Hon. Mr. Haig: Let us try it.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: That is another matter which a committee could consider.