

Post Office Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 75(11), the recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred.

The hon. member for Brandon-Souris moves motion No. 2 as follows:

That Bill C-240, an act to amend the Post Office Act, be amended by deleting from clause 2 the words "not established by this act," in line 41 at page 2 and substituting therefor the following:

"not established by this act and, in particular but without restricting the generality of the foregoing, establishing preferential rates on any such class of mailable matter in the case of a Canadian charitable organization that is registered under the Income Tax Act and operates for the benefit of a class of persons who are physically or mentally disabled and recognized as so disabled under any federal or provincial law or for the betterment of national health and welfare;"

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, the main purport of the amendments to the Post Office Act is to raise the general rate of first-class letter mail. However, there is another side effect that has been mentioned by the minister. When the amendments have been either accepted or defeated, or when the bill has been considered by this House, he intends to increase the rate for third-class mail.

I am sure that all hon. members have received representations from charitable organizations such as the War Amputees of Canada, the tuberculosis association and various other societies across the country which operate on a voluntary basis in the interests of the disabled. These representations make the valid point that approximately two years ago there was an increase in the third-class rate which amounted to 66½ per cent in the cost of their direct mailing campaigns. At that time the same voluntary associations made representations to the government and members of this House. The debate raged strong and furious in protest over the increase but the government paid no attention. Once again the minister has announced that there will be a further increase in the third-class mailing rate of these voluntary agencies.

I have worded my amendment very carefully to deal with the argument raised in committee by the minister when we were considering the bill. It was the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) who raised the question. I have a copy of the minutes of the committee, issue No. 18, covering the discussion for Thursday, June 10 last. In reply to the representations of the hon. member, the Postmaster General said:

• (9:20 p.m.)

I told them that we would look into that, but I also pointed out to them that it was not easy; that in the United States they

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

have a kind of category where these could come in and that the deficit in that category in the States is about \$350 million. And now that it is a Crown corporation, they are looking for a way to get out of it. Here in Canada there are about 35,000 organizations which, under National Revenue, are considered as charitable organizations and whose receipts you can use to take off your income tax as a gift.

I submit that these arguments are irrelevant to the question at issue. One refers to the situation in the United States which has nothing to do with the situation in Canada, and the other refers to the fact that there are 35,000, charitable organizations in Canada which enjoy certain privileges under the Income Tax Act. In the amendment I have proposed I specified quite particular areas of concern. This narrows the view to half a dozen or a dozen organizations which might be involved, rather than the 35,000 to which the minister referred.

My amendment deals with Canadian charitable organizations which are registered under the Income Tax Act and which operate for the benefit of a class of persons who are physically or mentally disabled and recognized as so disabled under any federal or provincial law or for the betterment of national health and welfare. This defines the area of concern about which representations have been made to hon. members by the War Amputees of Canada and similar voluntary groups.

There is precedent for giving such groups special consideration in the matter of postal rates. Indeed, in the bill we are now considering free mailing privileges are extended for the transmission of letters, books, tapes, records and similar material for the use of the blind. Obviously, the minister is concerned about this matter because he concluded the statement he made in committee the other day with these words: "We are looking at that just the same." In other words, notwithstanding his arguments with reference to the experience in the United States and the large number of charitable organizations listed by the Department of National Revenue, he was still considering the matter. He then went on to say, however:

But it did not give them a very optimistic reply as they left me. I told them we would look into that and they would get their answer before July 1.

Well, July 1 is Dominion Day, Canada's birthday, and from the tone of the minister's observation it occurred to me he did not intend to hand these charitable groups, in particular the veterans of Canada, a happy birthday present. In fact, the statement I have just quoted was one of the main reasons which prompted me to introduce this amendment.

If the minister proceeds with this proposal to increase the cost of third-class mail, I understand that those organizations which send out appeals by mail will more than likely be obliged to discontinue this part of their important charitable operation. After all, increases in postal rates were made as recently as 1968. Then again, as I understand it, the revenue derived from mailing campaigns generated by the restricted number of organizations to which I have referred is about \$1 million, and the minister may well be killing the goose which lays the