

*Post Office Act*

this service as a sacred one. When we mailed something, it could reach its destination without any concern. If any item got lost, it was possible to find it without too much difficulty by filing our complaints to the postmaster or the authorities.

The minister also said, and I quote:

Government has to decide if the taxpayers of this country should subsidize services whose main users are business and industry. Approximately 80 per cent of Post Office volumes are in fact derived from business and industry. Given this, the principle of successive operating deficits, to be supported by general taxation, would appear inequitable.

Mr. Speaker, even if the main users belong to the business and industrial sectors, the fact remains that under this procedure, in the field of business and industry, costs increase to the same extent and the consumer ends up footing the bill. If I were in business, if my operating costs increased because of higher postal rates, as a businessman, I would have to put in the expenditures column, higher expenses, so that these could be added in the end to my income. This would also apply to the manufacturing cost if I were in the industrial field. I would indirectly ask the consumer to cover them, which is normal.

Although it is said that 80 per cent of the mail is sent out by business people and industries, it is however the population that indirectly pays for it. If I were convinced that the increase mentioned in the bill would provide towns of about 1,000 people with the services of a post office, I would perhaps be more favourable to this legislation.

I would like here to appeal to the minister and make several requests that I have expressed before and which he has understood very well. However, he is unable to answer members' requests concerning the building of new post offices. If I were quite sure that those increases would finally be used to enable the minister to meet those rightful demands, I would have, in all fairness, to trust him and give him the support he needs under the circumstances.

In addition, the minister referred—and rightly—to the purchasing power of the dollar to justify that increase and I quote:

In terms of the purchasing power of the dollar, the basic increase of seven and eight cents is actually lower than the four cent rate which came into effect in 1954.

I am quite pleased to read what the minister said in that connection, Mr. Speaker. He takes into account the increased cost of living, the depreciation of the dollar to justify increased demand as far as the postal service is concerned. However, the same factor should also be considered with regard to families and old people. When we used that argument to ask the government for amendments to the legislation authorizing payment of family allowances or pensions to the disabled and the old, we were laughed at.

It will be recalled that in 1945 when family allowances were established, the dollar and the cost of living were not what they are today. If it is fair to advocate a postal increase on the basis of a higher cost of living and

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

depreciation of the dollar, I ask the other ministers of the government, the Minister of Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) for instance, to invoke the same reason when a study is made of the legislation concerning family and welfare allowances, etc.

Mr. Speaker, if it is logical to consider such factors, it should have enabled ministers and members to provide for improvements in other fields that are as justified as the one we are asking for today.

Bill C-240 is a kind of little omnibus bill, which puts me in a somewhat conflicting position. As a matter of fact, it contains changes, two of which are necessary.

First, it provides for an increase in the commission to agents selling postage stamps. Indeed, I can understand that postmasters selling stamps to the public deserve a pay increase; after all, the pay they get from the Postmaster General is not always proportionate to the work they have to do. I can also understand that it could be very difficult for the minister responsible for the postal service and officials to establish standards that would be absolutely fair for all postmaster across this country. That is why whenever I happen to talk with postmasters who ask me to appeal to authorities in order to get them a pay increase, I always make it a point to find out the total number of their customers, their turnover, etc. so as to be sure that their request is justified.

Second, this bill provides for collective mailings free of postage in the case of members of Parliament. I believe I am justified in saying that I should support that provision had it been put forward separately.

A few weeks ago during the debate on Bill C-242, I pointed out to the government the needs of Parliament members for services and this service was precisely one of those, we wanted so as to have an additional tool to better serve the people.

I will not repeat what I have already asked and this is why, in my opinion, this is a kind of a small omnibus bill which contains both good and bad things. Therefore, we must determine whether the pros outweigh the cons.

This is why I have analyzed as objectively as possible all the provisions of the bill and taken it upon me to give my opinion during this debate.

I would like to conclude by asking the minister in charge of the Post Office when he closes this debate to enlighten the House about the printing of stamps. Are they still totally or partly printed by the British American Bank Note Company Limited? Are they still totally or partly printed by the Canadian Bank Note Company Limited with all its equipment? Are they partly printed by the British American Bank Note Limited and partly by the Canadian Bank Note Company Limited? I would like the minister to tell the House why the printing of stamps is done by those two companies and what is the approximate annual amount paid to them, because, in the absence of information to the contrary, I always thought that the government did not buy the stamps sold to the public, but had them printed. In fact, I believed that the Queen's printer did the job, but according to the information obtained, it is entrusted to the two companies I have just mentioned.