

where the word is defined. But, in any case, as has been pointed out, this statute involves the creation of a new department or the creation of a new branch of the department—to all intents and purposes it is a new department—and it might very well be thought that the word “superintendent,” as defined or used under any regulation of the department, if it is so used, would not have necessarily, the same meaning as under this Act. Therefore, I think it desirable that the Postmaster General should consider this before passing the Act in its present form.

Mr. SPROULE. I would ask the hon. Postmaster General to tell us what the duties of the superintendent are, as there seems to be some misunderstanding in regard to that. I understood him to say that these officers were already appointed. But I am informed by my hon. friend (Mr. Beattie) sitting to my left that while there is a man in London whom he regards as doing that duty, he has no office but simply goes on to the train and looks after the exchange of the mails. But he has no office and no one under him. But it is clear from the Postmaster General's explanation that this officer is to have a residence at some particular point and an office and is to have clerks under him, because the Bill speaks of “the scale of salaries of clerks and other employees in the offices of the superintendents.” Perhaps the hon. Minister could explain that.

Mr. BEATTIE. My hon. friend (Mr. Sproule) seems to have misunderstood me. Mr. McWhinney, who fills the position of superintendent at London, as I understand it, has an office up stairs in the post office building, but he has no clerks. His duty is somewhat the same as that of a superintendent. He visits the trains and railway mail clerks going both east and west. He is a very efficient officer, I must say. I may add that the transfer mail agent is an officer known in London for years. He has an office in the railway station and takes charge of the mails as they arrive and transfers them to their proper trains. It seems to me that this is merely putting the railway mail clerks under a new head and giving the present officers the different name of superintendents. So far as London is concerned both those positions mentioned in the Bill exist already. I think it is merely putting the department of railway mail clerks under a different head and making a new comptroller.

Mr. SPROULE. If that is the case, and it is the same man, and he is now named a superintendent, will the Postmaster General give us some explanation as to what additional duties he is expected to perform, which will necessitate the employment of other hands?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I am only too glad to give any explanation. The

Controller has certain duties assigned to him, as the hon. gentleman sees by reference to the Bill, and the superintendents are his agents, to assist to carry out those duties. If he has a staff to assist him, of course, their duties are those that are assigned to the branch. The general Post Office Act says that the Postmaster General may, subject to the limitations of the Act, assign duties to various officers, and that Act places railway mail clerks under local inspectors. That has not worked well; it has been an expensive and a cumbersome system, wholly against the public interest. This is a transfer of the most important branch of the service and placing it under direct control of the head of the branch.

Mr. SPROULE. What new duties will the superintendent have added to those which he has already performed?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. There will be a great reduction in the work done in connection with the railway mail service by the system I am asking the House to assent to. At present, the country is divided up into small districts. For example, in the province of Ontario the mail clerks have been assigned to those districts, and you have groups of inspectors and their staffs, and a system of clerks attached to them, and red-tapeism that makes it expensive to carry on the service, and that sets up a cumbersome and awkward system of the civil service, and, worst of all, it has greatly impaired the efficiency of the railway mail service. There has been no stimulus to the railway mail clerks to excel and to acquire proficiency. Any inquiry required to be made was a most troublesome affair. If the hon. gentleman is familiar with the geography of the country, let me give him an illustration. There are at present railway mail districts and an inspector's district at Toronto; there is also another at Stratford, and another at Barrie. A train leaves Toronto with two railway mail clerks of the department in a postal car in charge of postal matter for Orangeville, where the train divides, and one portion of that mail matter, we will say, goes to Teeswater in the Stratford district, and another portion branches off and goes to Owen Sound in the Barrie district. At that point of separation the Stratford mail clerk proceeds with his mail matter to Teeswater and the other to Owen Sound. They return, and finally meet again at Orangeville and go down to Toronto. Now, of those two clerks, one, we will say, has been attached to the Stratford district, and another to the Barrie district. They have, therefore, an inspector to whom they report, the Stratford man to the Stratford inspector, the Barrie man to the Barrie inspector. Neither of them live in their inspectorates, and they start on their journey in the morning from the inspectorate at Toronto. Some difficulty occurs on that train, some letter