

Supply—Post Office

"printed matter." Telephone bills can be mailed to customers at the lower, printed matter rate if the bills are only for a flat monthly telephone charge, and do not contain any long distance tolls or other extras.

The printed matter rate used to be 2 cents and the local first class rate 4 cents. The company was saving 2 cents, therefore, on every bill that was mailed out as printed matter.

Earlier this year, I suspect that Bell Telephone executives pondered far into the night when the post office presented them with an unexpected problem. The printed matter rate was going up to 3 cents.

Is it worth the bother, gentlemen, to sort out all the bills with no extra charges on them and send them through the mailing machines at 3 cents to save a penny?

Well, gentlemen, save a penny, make a penny, you know.

The Bell Telephone Co. decided to continue mailing these bills at the printed matter rate, and this save-a-penny program saves the Toronto office of the Bell Telephone Co. \$2,000 a month.

Ron Haggert writes that this saves the Bell Telephone Company \$2,000 a month but I prefer to look on it as costing the taxpayers \$2,000 a month to help the company mail out their invoices. I do not believe any such favoured treatment should be given to any firm in Canada, and I think this \$20 million deficit the postal service is building up can be mastered. I believe Hon. John R. Nicholson is the man to do it. It can be eliminated by careful attention to business details and by applying the business acumen he accumulated down there in the maritimes, with the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings and other maritime members.

If such things as contributions to super-annuation accounts and surgical-medical charges are properly paid out of current revenue and not set up as a funded charge against the post office, and if papers and magazines enjoying Canadian postal service are made to pay for the service they now enjoy, and if such special favours as that shown the Bell Telephone Company are stopped, I think the department can be put on a paying basis and will be a credit, not only to the Postmaster General but to the government of the day which is presently faced with the problem of clearing up situations that have existed far too long in the Canadian postal service.

Mr. Barnett: The plaudits which the Postmaster General has been receiving from all corners of the chamber have been so many and generous that I hesitate to add any, lest they go to his head. I shall merely confine myself to saying I always enjoy a fellow British Columbian being well treated.

[Mr. Cowan.]

Along with my colleague, the hon. member for Danforth, who spoke earlier, I too appreciated the kind of factual information given to us by the minister, especially with reference to the question of postal rates. In saying this, I speak as one who was a member of the house and took an active interest in the discussion the time we last had a general increase in the rates on first class mail. The kind of information which we got at that time, on which to assess a decision as to the advisability of the step, was woolly, to say the least. We had a very affable postmaster general but he was not able to present us with any convincing evidence concerning the need for an increase in the first class rates.

When the minister introduced his estimates, and if I heard him correctly, he said something about a policy that all should be treated alike in regard to postal service; but then he added the words, "in relation to population and accessibility". That amounts to saying that all people are equal, but some are more equal than others.

Like most hon. members I have encountered many aspects of the postal services, problems of rural post offices, and of compensation and conditions under which postal employees work, but the particular matter of concern to me is the problem which arises out of the transportation of the mails. I am sure the minister is familiar enough with conditions as they exist along the coastal areas of B.C., of which Comox-Alberni is a part, to understand what I am talking about.

I have had many discussions with a lot of the very able people who are in charge of the administration connected with the transportation of mails, and I have always found that the responsible officials of the department have bent every effort, within the general policies established by the department, to give the best possible service which the available transportation could provide. But always when I find that the service provided is not very adequate it comes back to the argument that the Post Office Department is not in the transportation business. That, of course, is true, and I cannot have any quarrel with that situation at this time. In other words, I am not suggesting that the Post Office Department should accept the responsibility for the creation of the actual physical means of transporting the mail, as a matter of broad policy, across the country. It is obvious in most cases that for some time to come it will be much more logical that mails be transported in connection with other commodities, or in connec-