

Post Office Act

measure goes through the way it is proposed. Why should all first class mail be moved by air? Not all first class mail has to be received the day after it is mailed. If people want that kind of service they should pay for it as they do in the United States. If surface mail is satisfactory across the country for much of the mail, why should the government worry about giving all-up mail service for all first class mail?

I have mentioned in the house before and I repeat that it was possibly 30 years ago when I heard the president of Trans-Canada Air Lines—before my confreres from Quebec jump to the rescue of Air Canada let me state that I am talking about 1937 when it was Trans-Canada Air Lines—make a statement in the Langevin block that he was not going to see T.C.A. operate at a loss and he would bill the Post Office Department with any deficit he thought he had, so he could show a block figure in the T.C.A. annual statement. I suggest to you that that is one way to run a postal service but it is not one of which I approve.

Why can we not have an analysis to find out what it costs to send mail by air services on a basis of weight and distance travelled compared with the cost of surface mail? There is no reason that we should use the most expensive method of transportation for first class mail, even if we do want to brag about the speed with which mail is carried in Canada, which we are told is an example to every postal administration in the world. If this is such an example to every postal administration in the world I should like to ask how many other postal administrations are following our example of using the most costly service possible for all first class mail even if not demanded.

The Chairman: Order. I must advise the hon. member that his allotted time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Chairman, I presume you need agreement.

The Chairman: Does the committee give unanimous consent in order that the hon. member may continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Cowan: I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and through you I thank the members of the committee for their kindness. I should like to make some further remarks on the matter of postal rates.

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We were told in an explanation given on September 29 that there will be some substantial changes in second class mail. Why have not members of the house been informed since September 29 what those changes are to be? Why do members of parliament who represent 265 constituencies have to sit here in the dark waiting for the cabinet to release the details of the substantial changes in second class mail at some time at their pleasure? I believe we should be allowed to discuss these matters fully and frankly and then adopt legislation according to the representations made by the elected representatives of the people. But oh, no. That is not the way of government today.

As found on page 2689 of *Hansard* for September 29 the Postmaster General had this to say:

Some of the magazines or newspapers now enjoying second class statutory rates will cease to have the benefit of these rates because we are working out a new definition of a Canadian newspaper or a Canadian periodical.

Note the words "we are working out". Are the members of parliament not allowed to work out a new definition of a Canadian newspaper, or do we have to rely on officials to work out that definition? Perhaps it is the cabinet which works out the definition. What are we sent down here for, just to act as rubber stamps on a piece of legislation once it has been worked out by someone, because we are not told who "we" is? I brought this to the attention of the house when the broadcasting bill was brought down.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): It is the members of parliament.

Mr. Cowan: I should like to think the Postmaster General meant members of parliament. I should state that I believe the Postmaster General is one member of the cabinet who would like members of parliament to work out this legislation before it is brought down, and I say that with 100 per cent sincerity.

On September 29 the Postmaster General also stated that there will be free zones for weeklies. This is a contentious matter; yet here we have the cabinet telling us through the Postmaster General that there are going to be free zones for weeklies. How do you reduce the deficit in respect of second class mail by continuing free mail services for anybody?

After I spoke during a debate in this house about free postal services being available to publications with under 10,000 circulation