

Supply—Post Office

well as this year. We have a Christmas stamp coming out this year, which is an innovation and which is a really Canadian stamp. There is also going to be a stamp that will appeal not only to a lot of members on this side of the house but will have a special appeal for hon. members of the official opposition. It will be a stamp with the Queen's head commemorating the royal visit this fall. In so far as the alleged shortage of stamps bearing the Queen's head is concerned, I may say it is a standing order that every post office must carry stamps in the denominations of ones, twos, three, fours and fives. If any member has a complaint and he wishes to write me I will see that it is corrected.

We have five very interesting stamps coming out next year. However as a native of the maritimes I am happy to say that in my opinion three of the loveliest stamps I have approved are the violet for New Brunswick; the mayflower or trailing arbutus for Nova Scotia and the dogwood for my adopted province of British Columbia, which are coming out next year.

Reference was made to the postal union and I am happy to say my deputy minister has just returned from a six weeks meeting of the postal union in Victoria. I have had a most interesting verbal report from him covering some of the matters referred to by hon. members. I welcome him back and I can tell the committee it is a great thing to have him back after six weeks' absence.

With regard to the question of stamps, I may say the suggestion made by the hon. member for Wellington South for a stamp to commemorate the late Colonel MacRae is one that commends itself to me. The practice of the department is to issue commemorative stamps every 10 years, every quarter century and every half century. The hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi, who has been assisting me today in the absence of my parliamentary secretary, tells me Colonel MacRae was born in 1872, so that in eight years time we could have a commemorative stamp, following the practice established.

I was queried concerning the increase in the number of rural routes and letter carrier walks. The number of rural routes decreased by one during the past year, but the reason for that is that letter carrier delivery has taken over from the rural route and there has been an increase in the same period of 116,000 calls.

Reference was made to public relations. During the 17 years I was in industry I was

a strong believer in devoting more time to public relations, and I shall do what I can to encourage them in every way. The hon. member for Comox-Alberni asked whether I was a member of any cabinet committee dealing with transport, and I can tell him I am a fairly active member of that cabinet committee.

The hon. member for Assiniboia stressed the importance of new post office facilities in smaller communities, and this was also referred to by the hon. member for Queens-Lunenburg. The department has a regular building program averaging in excess of 100 post offices a year. We have somewhat fewer than 12,000 post offices in Canada, of which 9,000 are rented. The program to which the hon. member referred was brought in as part of the winter works program last year. It was a supplementary program, but the stage was reached when it became obvious that the post offices could not be completed during the winter and a halt was called to it. Sites had not been chosen and there were other factors as well. The matter is under study and I hope the government will have a program to announce at an early date.

I am not concerned so much with the costs of construction as with the costs of operation after they are built. I find these add considerably to the costs of the department.

The hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka referred to the railway mail clerk problem. Their jobs are definitely affected but it is because of railway changes, railway abandonments, and alteration of railway schedules. I have discussed this matter with several district directors, with the deputy postmaster general and others. We have a high regard for the experience of these railway clerks and we use them wherever possible.

With regard to the other matters raised, as I said earlier, I shall have to deal with them by letter if that is agreeable to the committee.

Item agreed to.

Resolutions adopted in committee of supply this day reported and concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Batten): The house will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely public bills and private bills.