

Post Office Act

the recommendations made by the Glassco royal commission. I have no way of knowing whether any of the recommendations in the Glassco commission report have actually been implemented, but I should like to refer to them for a moment. The commission made some specific recommendations, which are contained in the report on government organization volume 3, pages 350 to 351. Extensive changes were suggested in the operational scheme, the financial methods and in almost all aspects of the post office's work. The commission foresaw an annual saving of at least many millions of dollars if its recommendations were heeded.

The following, Mr. Chairman, is a summary of some of their money-saving recommendations: a time study approach in all offices, with a potential saving of \$7½ million; reduction of wicket staff, with a potential saving of \$2.8 million; an analysis of sortation methods, with a possible saving of \$4.8 million; and a thorough analysis of highway transportation, with a projected saving of \$1.2 million. These in total would provide a saving of \$16.3 million. Therefore my second question to the minister is: Have any of these recommendations been followed? What action has been taken toward the implementation of cost-saving programs? Has there been any real effort toward economy? All indications are that there has not been any real effort in this direction.

Having this in mind, Mr. Chairman, I think that we should delay implementation of this legislation until the minister can come before the house and say: We have saved X dollars by reducing inefficiency; we can save X dollars by making certain changes in operation and sortation. In other words, when the minister is able to say that he has actually tried to cut costs and to maintain service, only then should we support the government on this new bill.

Whether or not the post office has instituted these recommended changes we do not know. However, before the post office raises its rates to the Canadian public we should be assured that every opportunity has been taken to reduce costs. Not only is there a lack of information available but there is a stupendous amount of misleading information, and it is my guess that greatly increased efficiency should be possible.

I suggest, sir, that this bill be delayed for say six months so as to give the Postmaster General the opportunity to initiate some innovations and to streamline procedures, but

particularly to curtail expenditure. Perhaps if he really goes at the task properly he can lead the way in demonstrating to his colleague the Minister of Finance how a sincere effort coupled with action might obviate the easy way out of simply raising rates.

Mr. Mather: Mr. Chairman, there are a couple of reasons I have some particular pleasure in rising to take part in the discussion of the postal service and its rates. One of the reasons is that I am one of those who believe in the merits of public enterprise as well as private enterprise. I think the postal service of Canada, broadly speaking, is one of the best services of its kind in the world. It is probably the federal function that gives most satisfaction to most Canadians. I think the service is really wonderful when we consider the vastness of our country and the immense volume of mail which is handled every year which amounts, according to the figures I have, to approximately four and three quarter billion pieces of mail each 12 months, the vast bulk of which is picked up and delivered without error within 24 hours.

I think the degree of efficiency and lack of error in the postal service are quite well indicated by the fact that by the end of 1965, the last year for which I have an available figure, the number of inquiries—and an inquiry does not necessarily mean a complaint to the postal service—had dropped to 68 for every one billion pieces of mail carried. I doubt very much that any private enterprise can match the efficiency of the Canadian postal service. It is a very big service with approximately 44,000 employees and it does a business which amounts to \$300 million a year.

I said there were two reasons I had some particular pleasure in saying something on this subject, Mr. Chairman, and my second reason is a personal one. At one time I was a letter carrier and was part of the postal service. I therefore know a little more about it than I might otherwise have known. You might say that I learned the post office business by mail.

• (3:50 p.m.)

At any rate, Mr. Chairman, the Postmaster General is asking parliament to increase postal rates in the case of letters being delivered in the postal area in which they were posted from 4 to 5 cents, an increase of 25 per cent, and in the case of letters which are posted in one district and are to be delivered in another from 5 to 6 cents, an increase of 20 per cent. These increases, if allowed,