

*Post Office Act**[Translation]*

**Mr. Côté (Longueuil):** I move:

That Bill C-240 be amended by striking out lines 28 to 31 on page 7 thereof and by substituting therefore the following:

"9. (1) Section 3, 5 and 6 of this Act and subsections 17(1), (2), (3) and (5) of the Post Office Act as enacted by section 4 of this Act shall come into force on the 1st day of July, 1971.

(2) Subsection 17(4) of the Post Office Act as enacted by section 4 of this Act shall come into force on the 1st day of April, 1972."

*[English]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Chair's understanding is that the motion has been put to the House. If hon. members are in agreement, we will continue with the debate on motion No. 3. The hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) has the floor. When this motion has been disposed of, we will deal with the motion of the Postmaster General.

**Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris):** I spoke at some length on this matter the other evening when we were considering the amendments. In view of the shortness of time, I do not think I need to put those points again. As a matter of fact, as I look across at the benign countenance of the Postmaster General (Mr. Côté), I think he is convinced that the three amendments that we have presented at the report stage of the bill, on sober second thought so far as he and the government are concerned, merit support. Certainly this amendment, which deals with the basic across the board increase, is one that should have the unanimous support of the House, and even of members on the government side.

There has been an extensive discussion on the wisdom of increasing inflationary pressures by applying a substantial increase in the cost of the postal service, which is a basic public service. At the second reading stage, members of this group moved that the bill be pushed forward for six months, the traditional six months hoist. We did this under the impression that within six months the Postmaster General would have the assurance that these amendments, these reforms, these improvements in policy that he talks about in vague terms, would have had a chance to exert their influence in the postal department. I am sure that if the results were as beneficial as he has optimistically forecast, he would then be able to get by without the necessity for an increase. I leave the matter with him and the members of the House. I am sure that if they think rationally about it, they will support this amendment.

**Mr. W. M. Howe (Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Waterloo):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, spoke at the initial stage of this bill, indicating that I felt an increase now would be inflationary. I should like, therefore, to support my colleague, the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale), in his amendment. However, before I do that I should like to say to the Postmaster General (Mr. Côté) that I appreciate the interest that was shown by the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Laing) in going to my riding and looking at the post office in Elora. People there feel that they would

*[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]*

like to retain that building in its original form. I sincerely hope that the Postmaster General and the Minister of Public Works can get together and decide on some additions or some remodelling so that this beautiful old stone edifice can be retained.

There are a few other comments I would like to make, but I hope that will not deter the Postmaster General from making a favourable decision with regard to the post office in Elora. Although I was not able to participate in the committee proceedings because I was in Elora on that day and was not able to be back on time, I was disturbed to learn that the matter of the possible inflationary effect of the increase in postal rates was referred to the Prices and Incomes Commission. I think the most useless thing that was ever done in this House was the bringing into being of this commission. They have not done anything about inflation in Canada.

**Mr. Dinsdale:** Except to aggravate the problem.

**Mr. Howe:** The increase in the charges of chartered banks was brought to the attention of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) and of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford). The commission has done nothing about it. I was rather disturbed today when I heard that storekeepers in this city, who have always been in the habit of accepting travellers cheques from people who travel through this nation, are charged 25 cents on these cheques by the chartered banks of Canada. I think this is a disgraceful procedure, and why does the Prices and Incomes Commission not look into this and do something definite about it? This is why I was a little disturbed when the minister said he went to the Prices and Incomes Commission and learned from them that this increase would not affect the inflationary spiral in Canada. Anything that puts an upward pressure on the economy, particularly anything that has to do with the goods and services, increases the inflationary pressure. I objected in 1968 when the original increase was introduced, and just three years later another increase is proposed.

I do not think an increase at this stage is necessary. I agree with the hon. member for Brandon-Souris that after hearing of the great programs that the Post Office Department wishes to put into operation this legislation is premature. I do not think an increase is necessary now in view of the great developments which are to take place. If they work, we will not need the increase.

I see, according to the committee's proceedings, that one of the officials of the department was complaining that a private enterprise was stealing away the department's customers. This sounds to me like a little boy who is crying because somebody took his lollipop. I am disturbed at this kind of thinking. Imagine the great government of Canada not being able to give us good service and some little entrepreneur going around collecting the department's patrons and giving them better service. Why do they go to him? Because the service given by these private people is better than the service which the Post Office Department is able to provide.