

The Budget—Hon. J. P. Côté

I will not begin my speech by accusing the opposition with being dishonest, because I do not think it is, no more than the hon. member for Yukon believes that the government is dishonest. I am convinced that it is possible in this house to have discussion without accusing one another of dishonesty, and to raise the level of speeches.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

• (5:30 p.m.)

[*English*]

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): I must take this occasion, Mr. Speaker, to refer to the post office resolution which was defeated during this session. From my association with the members of all parties in the house I feel certain that its rejection was not a personal attack on me or on my administration of the Canadian post office. Hon. members have received much evidence over the last few years to demonstrate that nothing I would do in regard to the Canadian post office, nothing I would do in regard to this chamber, and nothing I would do in regard to our country itself would ever be undertaken in a frivolous manner. Anything I have proposed, said or backed I have believed in sincerely, Mr. Speaker. I believed in the postal resolution which was defeated, and because I believe and because I recognize my responsibilities I want to inform hon. members that, like MacArthur at Bataan, I will be back.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, before this resolution is presented again, I would like to deal with several points which would have been considered if that important legislation had survived.

The Glassco commission recommended an improved accounting system for the Post Office Department. It was meant to include in the budget of the Post Office Department—

Mr. Lambert: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is out of order because the fate of that resolution has already been settled.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): I know, Mr. Speaker, that the house has reached a decision regarding that resolution, but I can still talk about the Post Office Department in this house.

I was saying that this new accounting system was designed to include in the budget of the Post Office Department all expenditures incurred by other departments and government agencies. It has been adopted and has dispelled forever the illusion that our budget was always well balanced.

[*Mr. Côté (Longueuil).*]

A recommendation of the Glassco commission was immediately replaced by another. After setting down the operating costs, a new system was established to breakdown these costs into the various classes of mail. The system was established through the most modern techniques of statistical sampling, added to all possible variations affecting the handling of the various classes of mail.

The results achieved met exactly the wishes of the Glassco commission. In the Post Office Department, we now know the cost of handling each class of mail. We also know how the rates should be changed so that each class of mail may cover its own costs.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, the implementation of these two Glassco commission recommendations did away with this dream of a balanced budget with ten-year-old rates.

First class mail rates were increased in 1954. Thirteen long years later, we are considering a new increase. Even without a thorough knowledge of the most modern administrative technique, anyone of us can conclude that rates established in 1954 are obsolete in 1967, unless everything has remained at the same point, such as the mail volume, the number of employees required, the salary levels and the requirements of the service.

For the last part of the fiscal year 1967-68, the handling cost of first class mail will exceed anticipated revenues for that class of mail.

Mr. Lambert: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I deeply regret to interrupt the hon. minister, but he is apparently bringing forward the arguments which he should have raised the other evening and which are directly related to the resolution which he introduced. If he wants to deal with the general administration of his department, we are willing to let him do so, but frankly, Mr. Speaker, I feel that the hon. minister is now out of order.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, I am now discussing the general administration of the department and as administration is based on revenues and expenditures, I suggest that this is essential, since the department has the most substantial revenues within the government and if the Post Office Department is to be dealt with, it is necessary to refer to its revenues.

Mr. Lambert: But, Mr. Speaker, the minister should not be allowed to use the back door if he has been forbidden to enter through the front door.