

Post Office Act

This statement appears at page 319 of volume 3 of the report. But the Glassco commission report goes on to make the following significant statement, and it is something that is not quoted by the government or by the minister. It states that loss, the deficit in the postal service, arises mostly on second-class mail. Glassco himself says that other classes were operating close to the break-even point, and by that he means first-class and third-class mail. That particular statement appears at page 324 of volume 3 of the Glassco commission report. Obviously then there is no support from this source, as has been implied by the minister, for what the government is attempting to do under the present amendments to the Post Office Act.

When the minister introduced the legislation on second reading he made the following statement:

There has been a loss of public confidence in recent years in the Post Office Department.

I would like to suggest that this loss of confidence is largely responsible for the growing deficit that has been given as one of the main reasons for the necessity of an increase in rates at this time. When I was discussing the previous amendment I stated that there has been a decrease in the business of the Post Office Department, a decline in volume. I would think that this as much as anything else is the reason for the deficit of some \$32 million with which the minister is wrestling during the fiscal year, rather than any other particular cause or factor. Again I would argue that this deficit of some \$32 million will be removed if the policies of the government have the beneficial effect that the minister has indicated.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): That is on first-class mail.

Mr. Dinsdale: Yes, first-class mail. I do not have the figures for second-class and third-class mail but, as the Glassco commission reported, first and third-class mail prior to the machinations of the former Postmaster General were operating at the break-even point and the real source of the deficit was in the second-class mail category.

Before we accept the proposal of the minister we should think in terms of its inflationary impact on the economy. I asked the minister, when we were discussing the subject in the committee the other day, whether this particular item had been referred to the Prices and Incomes Commission. He implied that it had been looked at by PIC and that they had given it their blessing.

The Prices and Incomes Commission has been coming under increasing criticism from all segments of the Canadian economy because it has not been performing the tasks that it was assigned by the government. If it is true that a 100 per cent increase in the cost of local mail delivery during the three years this government has been in office has the approval of PIC in light of the continuing inflationary pressures, I can understand why there is a growing clamour on the part of the people of Canada that PIC has outlived its usefulness and that it should be disbanded as something that is quite ineffective in discharging the responsibility that was given to it by this government.

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

It is unfortunate that we did not have a chance to hear from Dr. Young, chairman of PIC, because perhaps he could have given us some statistics which would demonstrate that he has thoroughly examined the inflationary impact. I think that a 100 per cent increase at this time is not in the best interests of Canada. I see it is ten o'clock. I will continue this discussion when we resume the debate. At this time I put the amendment before members of the House. I am sure that in the interval, if the Postmaster General looks at it from this standpoint he will agree to it.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

• (10:00 p.m.)

MANPOWER AND IMMIGRATION—INSTRUCTION TO EMPLOYEES IN KITCHENER-WATERLOO AREA TO ANSWER TELEPHONE IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, on June 10 I directed a question to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Lang) asking whether instructions had been issued by his department to Manpower and Immigration officials in the Kitchener-Waterloo area that pursuant to the Official Languages Act employees must answer the telephone in French and English, and if the caller starts to speak French the employee will interrupt, indicate that he cannot speak French and that the caller will have to ask his question in English. I am very pleased the minister is in the House and I hope he will provide an explanation for the manner in which these instructions were issued.

We in the New Democratic Party supported the Official Languages Act. We took a great deal of pride in going along with that controversial measure because we felt it was something that should be tried in Canada, was worthy of our support and should be given all possible encouragement. In an election campaign a former member of this House who is now Premier of Manitoba took very considerable risks to support the official languages bill despite the advice he was getting from many people about the nature of the political dynamite with which he was dealing. I say these things as an indication that we have not waived in our support of the Official Languages Act.

My concern, therefore, is that if instructions of this type are issued the minister should give an explanation for them. Perhaps they were misunderstood, but in this form they simply rub people the wrong way. They look ridiculous and the whole official languages' approach may be placed in jeopardy due to the insensitivity of people who issue instructions of this kind.

In my area the languages that would be most in use in immigration offices are Portuguese and German. My understanding is that almost no calls come through in