

that we would not close any more small rural post offices except for extraordinary reasons got the same response.

Of course, since those announcements, the service has improved some. This is only a brief idea of the re-organization of the postal service.

In all fairness, it must be recognized that the program represents the biggest effort of a government to update the postal service. It is understandable that, as the minister in charge of the Post Office, I feel so proud. Never has the Post Office Department had so much money to spend in all its history to give the postal service the efficiency Canadians deserve. When all this is achieved, Mr. Speaker, we will have the most automated and fastest postal system in the world.

[English]

The post office is also investigating a number of new services which will supplement and complement the existing range of postal services. These are planned for introduction in late 1971 and 1972. One program being tested at the moment will provide mailers with the opportunity of bulking their mailable material in bag lots between major points at substantial savings. We have given this new service the name "Postpak", and you may expect to hear more about it.

We are also looking into an entirely new type of super-fast service for letters, documents and business information within and between major cities or wherever a suitable market exists. This service will operate on the same principle as assured mail except that the mailing deadlines will be substantially later, with guaranteed over-night delivery. Naturally, the price charged will be commensurate with the service offered, but will provide businesses and individuals with a service capability that does not presently exist. As I have already said, we have lost some business in the post office during the past few years. We are going to get that business back and we are going to give much better service.

The hon. members for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) and Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thomson) have raised questions about delegation of the powers of the Postmaster General, as proposed in clause 1, subclause (3) of the bill. First, let me point out that the power to delegate is being sought for the purpose of making field management in the postal service more effective by enabling it to respond quickly when the need arises in a particular situation. Such authority will be delegated by the Postmaster General personally, on the basis of need, and confidence in those to whom authority will be conferred. Furthermore, the Postmaster General will continue to be accountable for the postal service. Those to whom authority is delegated will exercise that authority in his name and he will be answerable for any action taken.

When delegated, the authority will be exercised within policy guidelines established by the Postmaster General. The sole purpose of the proposed delegation of authority is to enable us to derive the full benefit of decentralized administration, by making it possible for field managers to deal promptly with problems that arise, without the necessity of awaiting decisions from headquarters. No

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powers which are not already delegated to the deputy minister will be delegated to other persons.

Members have raised the question of what happened to the studies that were conducted from September 1968 to November 1969 by the firm of Kates, Peat, Marwick and Company. Their findings were published in the book "Blueprint for Change" on November 1, 1969. This report was tabled in the House of Commons on December 11, 1969. Since that date the feasibility of converting the post office to a Crown corporation has been, and continues to be, the subject of active consideration by the government. Given the country-wide effects of such a change, it is not a matter to be entered into lightly.

● (5:20 p.m.)

A number of representations have been made on the subject of charges assessed to rural box holders. At the present time, customers in towns and villages not having letter-carrier delivery are entitled to free general delivery service across the counter at their local post office. If they wish the additional convenience of a locked box, a charge is made. In cities and town where letter-carrier delivery is provided, locked box service is also available but at a charge which is about twice that made to rural residents. Nevertheless, we are examining this general situation and are reviewing our entire policy with respect to locked boxes and the relative scale of charges assessed to both rural and urban residents. Our objective will be to achieve the greatest degree of equity possible, making allowance for differing conditions and needs.

An hon. member, I think it was the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Hales), has raised the question of delays in the delivery of unaddressed householder mail. I am pleased to inform the House that following consultations with the unions delivery time for householder mail has been reduced from seven consecutive delivery days to five for magazines or the catalogue type of mail and three delivery days for the flyer, card or envelope type of householder mail. This improvement in service took effect as of June 1.

It is the intention of the Canada Post Office, I might add, to establish appropriate delivery specifications for classes of mail other than first class, once the assured mail program has been implemented across Canada. Other classes of mail will not receive the same type of priority in handling and will not as a rule be carried by air. This is one of the reasons they are cheaper. Nevertheless, we believe reliable delivery specifications can be provided which will emphasize regularity and consistency, rather than high speed. The quality of service and the cost of providing the service justify the substantially lower rates which will apply to these classes of mail. As in the case with the assured mail program, the quality assurance program will measure results in relation to specification, on a continuing basis.

Comments have been made concerning the imbalance of foreign mail, and the cost of handling this mail. In discussing the costs incurred by the Canada Post Office in the handling of incoming foreign mail, reference was made to a universal postal congress which would take place on July 1, 1971. The last congress of the Universal