

Government Organization

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chairman, I can tell the hon. member for Roberval that in this field our policy is quite flexible. In fact, we have decided to keep open about a third of the 800 post offices involved. We are considering each case in great detail before taking a decision.

[*English*]

I might also make reference to the point made by an hon. member that during the debate on postal rates I had said that the rate for the Canadian Medical Association Journal would involve an increase of approximately \$1. This is quite right; I did say that. I was under the impression at the time—I corrected that figure later outside the house—that this journal was a monthly, in which case the increase would have been approximately \$1. In fact the increase is slightly over \$5 for the doctors who are the subscribers.

With reference to the Department of Communications, as I said in reply to another question put to me in the committee, I do not expect that we will be able to table the McIntosh report. I have discussed this with Dr. McIntosh and with some of my colleagues. When the doctor made his studies and consulted a great many people eminent in the field of communications and corporate activities he obtained a great deal of information on a confidential basis. His report was made on the supposition that all these confidences would be respected and that the report would be made to the President of the Treasury Board for his use and for the use of the government.

I do not wish to defend myself in any way but will simply state that the institution of the Post Office has changed very little in the last 100 years. As I have said repeatedly to hon. members, the Post Office is undergoing a process of rapid change. However, on many occasions we have consulted the unions. For example, we discussed the possibility of introducing single mail processing as early as last October 2, and we confirmed this decision in writing to the presidents of both unions on October 3. Since January 1 there have been almost daily discussions with them.

I do not want to go into all the comments that have been made on the difficulties faced by farm magazines and periodicals put out by non-profit organizations. We dealt with that matter quite thoroughly last week in the committee, although I realize there were only a few members of the house present. However, they can read the proceedings of the committee when they are printed.

The hon. member for Selkirk raised the question of the ownership of the communications system. This has not yet been decided. A bill will be coming before the house within the next few weeks to set up that corporation. At that time all members of the house will have a full opportunity to express their views on what type of ownership the corporation should have, whether it should be fully owned by private investors, by public investors or by the government, or whether it should be some mixture in between.

Our present intention in the field of the development of satellites is that the research and development of the satellite system should be done as much as possible here in Canada. I say this in response to a question put to me by the hon. member for Selkirk. We have not set aside any options, including buying off the shelf. However, as will be made clear when the bill comes down and following further discussions that we will have, our policy will be to develop the system entirely in Canada.

Again in response to the hon. member's question, I will say that the first satellite that will be going up will be beaming directly to the present common carriers and to the C.B.C. There is no possibility for some seven to ten years of satellites beaming directly to homes. Technically this may be possible well before that time but economically it will not be possible. I can simply suggest the reason why it will not be possible by saying that the strength of the signals emitted by present satellites and by our first satellite will not be strong enough to be picked up by a simple home antenna. As a matter of fact, it would require an earth station or an earth antenna which would cost in the order of \$100,000.

● (4:50 p.m.)

A great deal has been said about the current situation in the Post Office. I deplore one word that was used during the debate when an hon. member said he considered the system to be offensive. I do not think it is offensive. Is it offensive that Post Office workers can now operate, for example, in walks near their own homes? This is a new change. Until now, in accordance with a decision made by the Post Office, a letter carrier could not operate either near or on the route where his home was located. I do not think it is offensive to eliminate archaic customs of this kind. Is it offensive that the Post Office should now have a five-day week for which the unions themselves have been asking for years? Is it