

Post Office Act

I came into this chamber just now, after having been over to the committee reporting services branch checking on the reporting of some committees, when the hon. member for New Westminster was speaking. As a member of the Liberal party sitting to the right of Mr. Speaker I wish to say I personally endorse everything the hon. member for New Westminster had to say in commenting on this resolution. I do not believe for one moment that first class postage rates should be raised without the house having been advised what are the details of the losses on other classes of mail, second class, third class and parcel post, if there are losses. It is not satisfactory to this country to have members of the cabinet stand up and say, "There is a deficit in the post office operation. Therefore we are going to raise first class postage rates." First class postage rates affect everybody in the entire country, and why should all the taxpayers of this country be asked to carry the load for the business firms that are being subsidized by too low rates on the classification of mail in which they are primarily interested?

When the broadcasting bill was introduced I commented on the number of times that the minister introducing it, the Secretary of State, stated: Under this bill we will be doing this and we will be doing that and we will be doing the other thing. Never once did she say that the cabinet was asking parliament to approve their suggestion that such and such be adopted as the policy of the parliament of Canada. We were simply told straight from the shoulder what parliament was going to do with regard to broadcasting, because didn't she have a broadcasting bill to lay before the house? Now here we are again with another representative of the cabinet introducing other legislation.

I have before me *Hansard* for September 29, 1967, and as recorded on page 2685 the Postmaster General, a friend of mine, moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Post Office Act—

Et cetera. As recorded on page 2686, during his speech he said:

The new rate on a letter for delivery within the postal area in which it is posted will be five cents—

There was no suggestion there that members of the cabinet were in fact asking parliament to approve a rate of five cents for the

[Mr. Cowan.]

first ounce or fraction of an ounce. Then he continued:

The rate on a letter posted within one postal area for delivery in another postal area will be six cents for the first ounce—

What are we meeting for? Why do they not just put it into effect? They are telling us what they are going to do. Why waste our time discussing the matter if that is what the rates are going to be? But I agree with the hon. member for New Westminster that we want a lot more facts before parliament should be asked to approve an increase in the first class mail rate, which affects all the people of Canada and, without doubt, will be a subsidy to business firms using other sections of the postal service.

I was here when the minister made his remarks on September 29 and it was interesting to me to hear him say—I suppose the facts are given to him by officials of the department—as recorded on page 2689 of *Hansard*:

The hon. member who has just made his speech—

That, by the way, was the hon. member for New Westminster.

—suggested that the ordinary citizen would have to pay the bulk of the revenue to be provided by this increase.

• (4:20 p.m.)

Let me tell him that the average citizen spends on the services of the post office \$1.89 a year; the increase will bring this up to \$2.12, so the ordinary citizen will be paying 30 cents a year more.

Then listen to this big business cabinet:

But consider the position of the Bell Telephone Company, for example, which has telephones in every home and sends a bill to every house once a month. What about companies and corporations of this kind? It is they who will really be carrying the burden.

Well, I do not shed any tears over organizations the size of the Bell Telephone Company, but I like to ask the members of the cabinet where they think the Bell Telephone Company will get the money to pay the increased postage rates. If you increase the postage rates of the Bell Telephone Company they will increase their rates to their subscribers. I know of no reason why we should force the domestic taxpayer, the home owner, to pay more for first class mail service on the ground that outfits the size of the Bell Telephone Company will share the increase in the rate too, because any increase in the postage rate they pay they will get from the consuming public, and then suggest that there should be no objections and no argument about an increase in first class rates.