

of newspapers which now prevails all over Canada, but to circumscribe it within ten miles of the point of publication of any newspaper. With regard to the proposition to reduce the rate upon letters, it is not proposed that that shall go into effect at once upon the passing of the Bill, but upon the issue of a proclamation to that effect. The two propositions, to reduce the rate upon letters and to impose a rate upon newspapers hang together a good deal. The question of convenience has to be considered, and whilst I believe that in the near future the expenditure and revenue of the Post Office Department will be at an equilibrium at least; at all events, with the assistance that will be afforded by this measure, yet, of course, that state of affairs is not going to be accomplished before the 1st of July next. I trust that after the clause proposing the reimposition of postage upon newspapers has been fairly in working order, we shall then have the post office a self-sustaining department.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. What is the change on letter postage?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. From the present rate of 3 cents per ounce or fraction of an ounce, to 2 cents per ounce or fraction of an ounce. We substitute two cents for three cents per ounce. The present rate is three cents per ounce; that is, the domestic letter rate within the limits of Canada. While some people may perhaps object to having to pay postage on newspapers—I do not know whether it will fall upon the publishers or upon the subscribers—they will at least have the satisfaction of knowing that if the papers are bearing part or the whole of the cost of their transmission, they will be getting at the same time a much lower letter rate. At this stage it would not perhaps be advisable for me to prolong the explanations, but since my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition has asked me to explain the Bill, I will say that the tonnage of newspapers carried free through the Canadian mails, since free transmission has been the law, has grown to enormous proportions, and the system has been, I think, in many respects, considerably abused. In the year 1889 the weight of newspapers carried free through the mails amounted to 9,000,000 odd pounds; in 1891 it went up to 11,000,000 pounds; and in 1897 it had grown to 16,557,490 pounds; and new papers are constantly appearing on the scene, demanding free transmission—papers of more or less importance, and many of them questionable as being newspapers at all, but yet complying with the requirements of the law, and therefore getting free transmission. The cost of the free transmission of newspapers is becoming a very serious matter for the revenues of the country. We have demands now for enormous increases in subsidies to railways, arising out of the tonnage of newspapers that are

Mr. MULOCK.

sent to us for carriage. I have in my hand a schedule showing the quantities of bags which we are called upon to furnish to newspapers from time to time, and I am sure it will be a revelation to the House to be told that two newspapers alone sent a requisition for over 3,000 bags, and another for over 2,000 bags, covering a very limited period of time.

Mr. WALLACE. What do the bags cost?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. The value of a bag is \$1.04½ cents. The 2,500 bags we had to supply to two newspapers a short time ago cost us in cash \$2,612.50; but that is only for a portion of the year. To these same two newspapers a short time before we had to send 3,700 bags, which cost us \$3,886.50. The capacity of each of these bags is eighty-six pounds; so that for these two newspapers alone, we carried free during the short time that these bags were in circulation, 318,200 pounds in the 3,700 bags and 215,000 pounds in the 2,500 bags. For these two newspapers alone, the people of Canada have paid within the last two or three months for carrying over half a million pounds weight, and for handling the papers, and distributing them all over this country. If you go down to the Ottawa post office any morning, you will find our army of letter-carriers engaged in carrying free enormous quantities of newspapers which are published in the city of Montreal, or in the city of Toronto. We have to supply bags for these papers at all points; we have to convey them, or are liable to be called upon to convey them, from the post office to the stations; we pay large sums for railway freight; we have to put on a larger staff than we otherwise would to handle them on the cars and at the points of reception when they arrive; we bring them to the post office; we sort them there; and we have an army of letter-carriers to carry them around and deliver them at the houses of the people—all at the expense of the ratepayers of Canada. All this is going on throughout this whole Dominion at this moment. I think the evil is one that requires a remedy, and therefore I take the liberty of submitting to the House the measure now in your hands. There is one other clause in the Bill, providing that the only examinations to which clerks in the post office shall be subjected for promotion shall be those connected with the work of the office.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I am greatly indebted to my hon. friend for the explanation he has given of the character of this Bill. It will greatly facilitate its discussion when we come to the point, to have had this explanation, which will inform both the House and the country of the general features of the measure. I do not propose to detain the House at any length in regard to this matter; but I would draw the attention of my hon. friend at the outset to a conclu-