

*Post Office Act*

in this house have I had as many representations on any subject, including capital punishment, the flag debate and many other matters, as I have had concerning this matter. I have had more than 1,500 letters regarding the proposed five day delivery service. It is true that about 65 or 70 per cent of these were from people in the rural areas, but there were a substantial number from people in the urban areas. They objected to the loss of the Saturday delivery. I believe this is something which should be considered much more carefully by the minister before he reaches a final decision.

From the representations which have been made to me, it would appear that people do not object too much to increases in the postal rates if they can be justified. On the other hand, as has been mentioned earlier, the newspapers, both daily and weekly as well as bi-weekly and others, object very much because they feel they will be forced to raise their prices or advertising rates. Of course we know who will have to pay for the increase. It will go right back to the public. The minister may reply that if the rates do not go up in this manner then the cost will fall on the public in another way because the treasury will have to pay. I submit there is a greater inflationary pressure involved when advertising costs are passed on to the public than when the treasury is asked to make up any deficit in the Post Office Department. There may be room for argument in this regard, but I submit that this is indeed the case.

There have been many suggestions to the effect that our post office is very efficient. I believe that over the years the Canadian post office has been a model of efficiency compared with those of other countries, for example, the United States. This, however, can be said no longer. After consulting with a number of hon. members I find that their experience has been similar to mine. My home is in Woodstock and my experience in the past 15 years has been that letters mailed in Ottawa in the evening have been delivered in my city in the morning. During the past year I have found that sometimes this would be the case but that on other occasions letters would be delivered in three or four days. I find that other members have had exactly the same experience.

The minister is proposing an increase in the rates while the efficiency of the service is going down rather than up. If the rates are increased I hope we will see a more efficient

[Mr. Nesbitt.]

operation in the Post Office Department. If for one reason or another the minister does not wish to send this bill to a committee for detailed study—and I believe that his officials are not qualified to advise the minister in respect of many of these matters—then I would hope that at some date, perhaps in six months' time, he would review this matter very carefully. The bill no doubt will be passed in due course. Therefore I suggest that he might undertake to review the whole matter at a later date, particularly in respect of the legitimate suggestions which have been made by responsible people.

I do not think this whole matter should be brushed aside on the ground that some people are engaging in some sort of small-time politics. I am sure the minister realizes that all members of this house are not always interested in playing some kind of small-time politics. Most members on both sides I believe have a genuine interest in improving conditions in the country.

Members of this house are faced with what I consider to be a most unsavoury proposal by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Macdonald). In the 15 years I have been here I have never seen anything like it. We are told that until we pass the post office legislation we will not have the budget debate and indeed will not have an opportunity to return to the farm legislation. To say the least, this is a very shocking statement. I notice that the President of the Privy Council is not present at this time. I dislike making remarks of this nature about a minister when he is not present.

Since the Postmaster General seems to be reluctant to send this bill to a committee, I suggest that perhaps we might vote on the amendment and conclude second reading. When we reach the committee stage we might then have an opportunity to obtain some of the information we desire. Although we would prefer that the bill be studied in a standing committee of the house, at least in committee of the whole we might be able to obtain some answers.

**Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to comment briefly on the proposed amendment to Bill No. C-116, to amend the Post Office Act. As we all know, the amendment before the house would have the result of referring the bill to the standing committee on transport and communications. I fully support the amendment. It must be clear to every member of the house who has