

*Post Office*

working conditions and psychology has occurred. It is still not easy to work in a modern Post Office facility.

It is important for us to know that the system can remain difficult, even with mechanization. If one goes into the Scarborough letter sorting plant, one will see a group of coders sitting in a row behind what appear to be typewriters. The letters go down a moving belt. That belt stops for four or five seconds, at which time the typist is required to copy the postal code from the envelope, and the code reappears on the envelope in the form of yellow bars. The future progress of the letter is controlled by an automatic and mechanized process based on yellow bars. The typist is required to read the postal code which is on the envelope, type it within a few seconds, and then switch attention to the next envelope which appears before her immediately. This process is repeated and repeated automatically and the postal coder becomes a part of the machine. One must agree that even though the working conditions have been mechanized and improved, they are difficult to adapt to and live with. The psychological and emotional strains of working in the mechanized Post Office are still very considerable.

Of course there will be breakdowns. For example, if the postal coder looks at the code on the envelope very quickly and misreads M1E 1E2 as N1E 1E2, the letter will end up in London, Ontario, rather than Toronto. It may require ten days to recover that letter. There are many management and systems problems still to be worked out. These are the kinds of questions which should be in front of us because they affect service.

It was for these reasons that I asked for the establishment of a special parliamentary committee to inquire into our postal service and the host of problems associated with the transformation that is occurring. Many of those problems are management problems and not problems caused by rate increases.

I will give another example. At any given time the Post Office is not aware of where bags of mail are, even though it seems to think so. The railways know where their boxcars are because the sides of the boxcars are coloured and numbered for computer reference. If a bag of mail goes astray, however, the employees at the Post Office do not know whether it is in Kitchener, Vancouver or wherever, because no such tracing mechanism exists. This is why the public will remain concerned about slow delivery.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business having expired, I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

● (2002)

**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

[Mr. O'Connell.]

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT****AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISH OFFICE OF COMPTROLLER GENERAL**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-10, to amend the Financial Administration Act, as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates, and motion No. 1 (Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West) (for Mr. Andre)).

**Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, before the adjournment I was recounting for the House the history of the Glassco commission, its purposes, what it hoped to achieve, why the change was necessary and the recommendations that were felt required. The major reason for the change was the fact that the comptroller was responsible for details of financial control, but he could not avoid the administrative details which were not to be his chief concern. In other words, he found himself in a difficult position. In fact, the history of the time would reveal that he found the work overwhelming, and the departments of government resented the interference of the then comptroller arrangement.

● (2012)

The new arrangement that was proposed was to sift out the administrative detail at the departmental level and to leave the nuts and bolts of the accounts to the accountant general. The system was sound on paper, and it may very well have been in practice if all its components had been set in motion. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The financial control was moved to the departments; Treasury Board assumed greater responsibility for financial management, and in 1969 the position of the comptroller of the treasury was abolished.

Two vital mistakes were made. Firstly, the decentralization of financial control to the departments was not made to financial officials but to senior officials who already carried a burden for policy creation and administration; or on the other hand it was made to junior financial officials who did not carry sufficient weight in their departments to keep financial priorities in the forefront of decision making. Secondly, the comptroller general's position was dropped, but no accountant general was appointed to replace him as had been recommended by the Glassco Commission. Instead, the Treasury Board tried to do everything.

You were here, Mr. Speaker, then. I have only read about this in the history of this department, but during that period of time the Treasury Board assumed responsibility for negotiations with the public service, who at that time had acquired the right to strike; it was given the responsibility for the bilingualism program; and it became increasingly important in setting the priorities of the government because of its increased responsibility for financial control. In this regard it seemed to be challenging the finance department for the final political say