

Postal Service

first class mail from Vancouver taking as long as two weeks to be delivered at a point in eastern Canada. On other occasions, the mail fails to arrive at all. I brought to the attention of the minister through correspondence the question of mail travelling from Canada to the United States failing to reach its destination. One of the explanations given is that when the five-day week occurs during holiday periods, such as over Christmas and New Year's, there is an unusually long delay because the two successive long weekends bring mail delivery almost to a standstill in many parts of Canada.

Because of this problem, the postmaster has been musing out loud that perhaps the six-day mail delivery should be restored to the urban parts of Canada as it was restored in the rural parts. I want to seize this opportunity once again to emphasize that members of the official opposition and of other opposition groups would have no hesitation at all in recommending to the Postmaster General (Mr. Côté) and the government that the six-day mail delivery system should be restored. We are all completely dependent upon mail services. The business life of Canada is particularly dependent upon it as it is the basic, fundamental means of communication. Surely, a government which places such emphasis on technological innovations in the communications field, such as a satellite which, at a cost of some \$90 million, is going to be placed in synchronous orbit with the earth some time next fall, and a government which ventures off into this sophisticated and rarified atmosphere of modern communications in Canada, could give us mail service which is somewhat better than the old pony and cart days. Sometimes I think the mail service today is slower than it was before the advent of trains and all the other modern means of transportation.

Basic to this is obviously the restoration of six-day mail delivery. Instead of wondering whether it should be restored, I urge the Postmaster General to re-institute this service immediately and he will receive the gratitude and plaudits not only of members of the opposition who have been advocating this but the public of Canada. I am sure such a move would help to restore the level of morale among the employees of the Post Office Department who, over the past few years, have been venting their spleens against the maladministration of the Post Office Department by rotating strikes, working to rule and other techniques of that kind.

If the parliamentary secretary to the responsible minister could give me some samples of this sort of complaint and representation from every part of Canada, we might really have a cross-section of public opinion on this problem of delays of mail delivery and non-delivery. I have received complaints from my own constituency, and other colleagues in the House have passed along complaints from their constituencies. I am sure the pattern is repeated in every part of Canada. It is for this reason I am anxious to have a sampling of the protests from the public outlining this particular problem.

There is one area in respect of increasing costs of postal services I should like to emphasize today. Here again, I am sure the protest has been loud and long from the public. Not only do I refer to the general increase in the cost of postal services, such as the 100 per cent increase in

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

respect of first class mail, I have in mind a specific area about which I should like to get further background information. I refer to the briefs, representations and protests that must have come from charitable organizations in Canada which have depended on a special postal rate in order to realize success in their appeal for funds. I could mention many groups.

At the time the Post Office Act was amended to remove this special postal privilege there were voluminous protests from groups such as the War Amps of Canada, the tuberculosis Christmas seal drive and so forth, all of which depend upon a nominal postal charge to communicate in a massive way with the people of Canada. Protests were made at the time the subject was debated in the House. The Postmaster General indicated he would give very serious consideration to these representations and, if he found that real injustice had been caused by this rather arbitrary adjustment upwards in postal rates, he would take the necessary action. I am sure it has been long since demonstrated that real hardship was created by this substantial increase in the rates which had formerly been given to charitable groups.

• (1730)

I know, for example, that War Amputees are having difficulty carrying out the mass mailing of automobile licensing tags. They have tried to find alternative methods of delivery through private facilities. In some cities this is possible, but in the more isolated parts of Canada it is impossible to get the service they had formerly. In larger cities where distribution has been carried out by other than the postal service, this represents a substantial decrease in the revenue of the Post Office Department because it has been found that private entrepreneurs can distribute these items at a nominal cost and still realize a sufficiently large profit.

I am sure that one of the reasons the Post Office Department in recent years has been showing increasing deficits is that they have lost revenue of this type. Because of the interruption of services due to rotating strikes, and so forth, they have lost to private carriers the business that was carried out almost exclusively by the Post Office Department. It is business they will never recapture because private operators are able to supply the service at a considerably lower cost than the Post Office Department.

Here are some of the facts concerning the deficit picture as shown in a parliamentary return. There has been in recent years a substantial increase in the deficit. From 1961-62 to 1967-68, first-class mail realized a profit. The highest profit was \$30.3 million in 1970-71. Even with the increase in the first-class postal rate, there has been a deficit in recent years. For example, in 1971-72 the deficit was listed as \$15.1 million. Fourth-class mail showed a modest profit until 1966-67. This is mail the distribution of which requires a minimum of effort, minimum handling, such as the mailing of literature, and so on, by charitable organizations which work on a mass mailing basis. As I say, fourth-class mail showed a profit until 1966-67, but since then there has been a deficit for each year.

When we go to other classes of mail we find the same picture. The deficit is closely related to the declining ser-