

HOUSE OF COMMONS

INQUIRY AS TO SETTING UP OF RADIO COMMITTEE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. G. DIEFENBAKER (Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Prime Minister, in the absence of the appropriate minister. In view of the fact that the house has decided today to sit from eleven o'clock in the morning, beginning shortly, is the Prime Minister in a position to advise whether, having regard to recent changes in policy by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the radio committee will be set up during the rest of the present session?

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): I am sorry I cannot give my hon. friend an answer offhand, but I shall hope to be prepared to give an answer on Monday.

NEWFOUNDLAND

REFERENDUM ON FUTURE FORM OF GOVERNMENT

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): The house may be interested in having the latest word in regard to the referendum taken in Newfoundland a day or two ago on the future form of government in that colony. Only nine out of twenty-five districts have complete returns. While incomplete the latest returns for the whole, up to 12.30 today's Newfoundland time, indicate the vote: for responsible government, 65,991; for confederation, 60,147; for commission government, 20,805. Apparently no form of government will have a majority, and another referendum will therefore have to be held, probably some weeks hence, to decide between the two forms, responsible government or confederation.

SUPPLY

The house in committee of supply. Mr. Macdonald (Brantford City) in the chair.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT

309. Departmental administration, \$1,096,287.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: There are one or two matters, Mr. Chairman, which I should like to bring to the attention of the minister with a view to securing some information from him. The first has to do with representations that have been made to me by postmasters in revenue offices.

For these men and women there are no such things as minimum salaries or hours of employment, holidays or promotion. They render a great service to the people of the country as a whole; they receive their payment on a commission basis, and since they are not classified

as civil servants, they receive no pension. According to representations made to me, during the war they worked for a number of government departments without any remuneration, giving assistance in reporting enemy aliens, national registration, the foreign exchange control board, and generally making themselves useful in connection with various activities furthering the war effort. Having regard to the increase in the cost of living, and the surplus enjoyed by the post office department, what consideration has the government given to providing for a 25 per cent increase in rates as requested by these postmasters? Also, what if anything, is being done toward the establishment of a pension plan for them?

Under the present deputy postmaster general, in common with hon. members in all parts of this house I have observed an attitude that I desire to commend. When matters are brought to the attention of the deputy postmaster general, he has been most diligent in his endeavour to remove any cause of inconvenience. I think it only fair to say that; for after all, many of these officials are doing responsible, effective and efficient work. Too often we take for granted what they are doing, and fail to pass on to them and to those who work with them the commendation of the constituents whom we represent in parliament.

What consideration, if any, has been given during the year to the reduction of the postage rate from four cents to three cents, which was indicated last year as a possibility? The matter is one that I think deserves the consideration of the minister, and I feel that the committee should have an explanation with regard to it.

I want to join with the hon. member for Wentworth in the representations he made last evening on a matter to which he has made frequent reference. He asked that something be done to relieve the people from the present high postage rates on parcels sent to Britain to help the people over there. I know of two or three persons in my own constituency who during the last year have sent parcels, to the limit now allowed, to the parents of young men who served in the armed forces of this country and whose acquaintance they made during the war. The minister has had this matter brought to his attention on previous occasions. I know he would have the support of Canadians everywhere were he to make provision to remove, as far as possible, the postage rates on parcels being sent to Great Britain by patriotic Canadians with a view to assisting the people over there to get additional nutritional value in their diet.