

odd houses served without increasing the burden on the letter carriers?

Mr. Lapointe: I suppose the loads of some letter carriers have been increased, but as I explained the other day the basis of the letter carrier's day is an eight-hour day. The routes are organized in order to permit him to do an eight-hour shift and no more than that. If the volume of mail increases and he cannot complete that route in eight hours, a rearrangement will be made. There is a constant reshuffling of these walks, particularly in the outskirts of Montreal, Toronto and other large centres which are developing quite rapidly. The number I mentioned is the net increase in letter carriers. I am informed that for the coming year we are providing for 506 more.

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): Am I to understand from the Postmaster General's recent observation that the eight-hour days were somewhat longer in 1956-57 than they were in preceding years. Let us look at the situation. The Postmaster General says that we are not increasing the load, which was the impression given to us in answers to questions; that the average number of houses served by a letter carrier is about 500. He then comes to us today and says that this load is being distributed over an eight-hour day. He tells us also that if the volume of mail is not as great the letter carrier will not have as much to carry, yet the statistics show that this year the volume of mail carried is greater than any year before. I say to the Postmaster General in all fairness that we should have a more adequate explanation than has been given us to now.

It has been demonstrated by previous figures that the average number of calls handled by our letter carriers is increasing steadily and that their burden is also increasing steadily and it would appear that the officials of the department are not giving sufficient consideration to the representations of the employees in this regard. Some of us have talked to these men and have found out what they are thinking and how they are working and we have reason to know that what we say is based on the facts. We now have further proof of this from the minister.

Can the minister not give us a further explanation as to why the department finds it necessary to increase the length of route and the burden of the average carrier?

Mr. Lapointe: As I mentioned before, the routes are based on an eight-hour day. The number of calls made may vary, and

undoubtedly does, depending upon the volume of mail which a letter carrier has to deliver. When the volume is such that a letter carrier is not able to deliver his mail within eight hours an adjustment of the route is made. One letter carrier may have only 250 calls to make because he has a high volume of mail to carry, while another one may have 800 calls because the volume is not so great. That second letter carrier may be able to complete his route in eight hours.

That is the basis of the operation and all routes are adjusted on the basis of an eight-hour day.

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): Is the minister telling us that in previous years the letter carriers were not working a full eight-hour day?

Mr. Lapointe: I did not make that statement at all. As my hon. friend knows, we introduced in the last years these call boxes to which a considerable part of a letter carrier's mail is taken.

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): You had those before last year.

Mr. Lapointe: I said in the last years. Mail is taken to these relay boxes located in different sections of a route and the carrier is thus able to handle a heavy volume of mail without having to carry it all himself from the starting point.

Progress reported.

At six o'clock the Speaker resumed the chair and the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

THE BUDGET

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

Hon. W. E. Harris (Minister of Finance) moved:

That Mr. Speaker do now leave the chair for the house to go into committee of ways and means.

He said: Mr. Speaker, hon. members will recall that a year ago I was confident that 1956 would be a year of further economic expansion. We have exceeded our expectations.

The budget white paper which I tabled yesterday afternoon provides a record of the economic trends and events of the past year. This evening I need only comment briefly upon them.

A year ago I budgeted on the basis of a 5 per cent increase in production, assuming, as

