

SATURDAY MAIL DELIVERY

AUGUST 4, 1977.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. CHARLES H. WILSON, from the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, submitted the following

REPORT

together with

SUPPLEMENTAL VIEWS

[To accompany H. Con. Res. 277]

The Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, to whom was referred the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 277) to express the sense of the Congress that the U.S. Postal Service should not reduce the frequency of mail delivery service, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the concurrent resolution do pass.

COMMITTEE ACTION

House Concurrent Resolution 277 was ordered reported by the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service on July 27, 1977, by a unanimous voice vote.

STATEMENT

Early this year, the Commission on Postal Service, a special study commission created by Public Law 94-421 to study the public service aspects of the Postal Service and other subjects, issued a report recommending that Saturday mail delivery be discontinued. The Commission estimated that the discontinuance of Saturday delivery service would reduce postal costs by \$412 million annually. Through attrition, approximately 18,000 full-time positions would be eliminated. The Commission attempted to support its recommendation in part on the basis of a small survey of public opinion which showed that 79 percent of the individuals surveyed would be willing to give up Saturday mail delivery if such a reduction in service helped hold down postal costs.

Immediately following the Commission's report on April 18, the Postmaster General summoned the leaders of major postal unions to

discuss the discontinuance of Saturday mail service. Subsequently, however, the Postmaster General submitted a request for a postal rate increase to the Postal Rate Commission to increase postal revenues by more than \$2 billion. Obviously, the Postal Service has no intention of "holding down" postal rates at the same time it moves to eliminate Saturday mail delivery. Public opinion would obviously never support higher postal rates to pay for reduced service.

On July 5, 1977, at the regular meeting of the Board of Governors of the U.S. Postal Service, Postmaster General Benjamin F. Bailar announced that the Postal Service has under consideration a proposed request to the Postal Rate Commission for an advisory opinion on a change in the level of service to reduce from 6 to 5 days the number of postal carrier deliveries each week.

House Concurrent Resolution 277 was introduced by Representative Charles H. Wilson and others in response to these developments. The purpose of this resolution is to express the sense of both Houses of Congress that 6-day postal delivery should be continued.

Since the original introduction of House Concurrent Resolution 277, 226 Members of the House of Representatives have joined as cosponsors.

Saturday mail service is an historical public service of the U.S. postal system. Simply put, it should not be discontinued without careful consultation with the Congress and an accurate estimate of the impact of such a change in service upon public opinion and postal operations. No evidence has been submitted to demonstrate what impact upon service this change would have. One immediate consequence would be the elimination of a delivery system for thousands of rural newspapers which are delivered on Saturday. Parcel post delivery on Saturday is a great convenience to the public to avoid having to travel to sometimes-distant postal facilities to pick up a package. Also, unless all mail were delivered on Friday, the backlog of mail to be delivered on Monday and Tuesday would be greatly increased. When one of the six "Monday holidays" occurs, the entire mail schedule can be seriously disrupted.

The committee recommends that House Concurrent Resolution 277 be acted upon promptly to advise the Postmaster General of Congress's disapproval of this proposed reduction in service to the American people.

SUPPLEMENTAL VIEWS OF HON. EDWARD J. DERWINSKI, SKI, HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 277

When Patrick H. Caddell, President Carter's political pollster wrote the scenario for the new administration's first 100 days in office, he may have had something like House Concurrent Resolution 277 in mind. Caddell told the new President not to shy away from matters of style.

"Too many good people have been defeated because they have tried to substitute substance for style," Caddell advised Mr. Carter in a 51-page memorandum. "They forget to give the public the kind of visible signals that it needs to understand what is happening."

Events thus far have demonstrated the Carter administration is adhering to the Caddell script on an almost line by line basis. While neither the President nor Caddell had anything to do with the draftsmanship of this resolution, the stylistic approach to problem solving obviously has won converts among the sponsors of this legislation and their bevy of staff assistants.

In considering this meaningless piece of legislation, we are doing a disservice to ourselves and to those Americans who are Federal taxpayers. It is a zero-based piece of legislation which will do nothing to preserve existing mail delivery standards.

The question of 6-day delivery versus 5-day delivery ultimately will be put on track by the White House and the Office of Management and Budget. Then it will fall to Congress to attempt to resolve the whole complex postal problem, including delivery standards through substantive, meaningful legislation, providing it can rise above knee-jerk criticism of the Postal Service.

Symbolism certainly is not the answer. House Concurrent Resolution 277 is a monument to nothingness.

EDWARD J. DERWINSKI.

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