



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

(R.—Kans.)

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SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1976 Bob Downen

DOLE WOULD EXTEND FREEZE ON POSTAGE RATES, POST OFFICE CLOSINGS

Senator Bob Dole announced today that he will offer amendments to extend a moratorium on rural post office closings and a "freeze" on current postage rates through September 30, 1977. The proposals, to be introduced on the Senate floor Monday, July 19, specify that no Postal Service request for postage rate increases can be submitted until after September 30, 1977, when a select Study Commission issues its rate structure recommendations to Congress. Similarly, no post office could be arbitrarily closed prior to that date.

"This breathing period will stop the mad rush of postage increases and service cutbacks, at least until a capable Study Commission has reviewed the postal situation and issued responsible recommendations on services and rates," Dole said. His proposals will also provide for appointment of a representative of "individual private users of first-class mail" to the Study Commission.

Dole's amendments will be discussed during Senate consideration of a major postal reform bill in late July. That bill would provide a billion dollar subsidy through September 30, 1977, for the deficit-ridden Postal Service, now suffering an accumulated debt of almost three billion dollars. The bill also establishes the Study Commission and places a temporary moratorium on postage increases and service cutbacks, but only until February 15, 1977.

"Nobody wants to see the Postal Service go down the drain, even though poor management may have put it in the shape it's in today," Dole remarked. "But if the taxpayers now come to the rescue with a partial subsidy, they deserve a guarantee against deterioration in service and an increase in rates. It is both fair and logical that this 'moratorium' should extend for the duration of the subsidy period provided in the Committee's bill."

The Study Commission, appointed by Congress and the President, is expected to recommend certain policy changes to make it possible for the Postal Service to operate economically and efficiently in the future. The February 15, 1977, deadline for the Commission's report is, according to Dole, "entirely too soon for completion of a thorough and useful study of Postal Service problems and solution. If this Commission is to be anything more than an election year sham, it needs to be given a reasonable chance to study the whole postal mess." The Dole amendment would give the Commission until September 30, 1977, to issue final recommendations, which would then be considered by and acted upon by Congress.