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The Week in Congress, recorded on April 8th, 1957.

From Washington, DC, transcribed, United States Senator J. Allen Frear reports again to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs.

Senator Frear: Thank you, Bob Kelly. A possible dispute between the Post Office Department and members of the House Appropriations Committee came into the open late last week and caused a great deal of comment on Capitol Hill as well as elsewhere. Involved was the request for supplementary funds by the Postmaster General with which to operate his department until the end of the present fiscal year, June the 30th. The Appropriations Subcommittee held to the view that the amount sought by the Postmaster General was excessive. His request was for about forty-seven million dollars, and the House committee initially approved seventeen million dollars. The threat of a drastic curtailment in Post Office services came forth promptly from the Postmaster General. Such an eventuality would certainly inconvenience the public, which usually bears the brunt of whatever mistakes are made by the executive or legislative branches of the government. While I believe that the Postmaster General’s attitude is somewhat precipitous, the real heart of the question lies in the long, unsettled issue of whether or not the Post Office Department can be operated at a profit, or whether, because it is a government service, it should be carried on in its present status even though a large deficit exists. Over eight years ago, when I first came to Washington, and served on the Post Office and Civil Service Committee, it was plainly evident that a realistic increase in postal rates was necessary if the department ever hoped to get out of the red. Except for first class mail, which was, and still is, paying its own way. It used to be that mail deliveries brought important matters and other necessary communications. But nowadays, it is not uncommon to find our mailboxes literally filled to overflowing with miscellaneous solicitations and circulars, many of which are not particularly desired by the recipients. All of this material adds to the cost of operating our Post Office Department. In addition, rapidly expanding suburban communities, which are developing because of our increased population, necessitated additional facilities for the delivery and collection of mail. Without question, the Post Office Department has a real problem to achieve financial equilibrium. Congress should recognize this problem
by adjusting postal rates to a realistic level. If it will not do so, then the country should be informed of that fact and an explanation made that the Post Office Department is to be maintained strictly as a service organization without being required to operate within its prescribed budget or in a manner which will make it self-sustaining. Curiously enough, I am told that the postal service in Great Britain operates at a profit, and in addition, provides more service and more frequent deliveries than do our postal system and does our postal system here in the United States. It goes without saying that adequate mail service is positively essential to our way of life, and it is unthinkable, in light of the billions of dollars we are spending abroad, that mail deliveries be so drastically curtailed as our Postmaster General has threatened to do. I have every hope and expectation that the question will be expeditiously and satisfactorily resolved, and that the long-patient public will not be burdened or handicapped in receiving its mail because of the nature of the Postmaster General or the unwillingness of Congress to take a firm position.

Mr. Kelly: Thank you, Senator Frear. From the nation’s capital, you have heard United States Senator J. Allen Frear in his regular report to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. [05:00] Senator Frear will be heard again next week at this same time, speaking from the Senate Office Building in Washington.

[End 05:11]