

May 20, 1960

POSTAL RATES ON AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS
(Educational Materials and Library Materials Rates)

Statement by Don White, Executive Vice-President, National Audio-Visual Association, before the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service of the U. S. House of Representatives, during hearings of the Committee on H. R. 11140.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

My name is Don White, and I am the Executive Vice-President of the National Audio-Visual Association, with offices in Fairfax, Virginia. The organization I represent is the national association of companies who distribute, sell and produce educational and religious films, filmstrips, recordings and various other types of audio-visual materials for use in schools, churches and businesses, along with the equipment necessary to project or reproduce such audio-visual materials. We are a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of Illinois, and our membership comprises some 582 companies, including about 397 audio-visual dealers and film libraries who distribute our specialized types of products, plus about 185 film producers, manufacturers and other suppliers of audio-visual products.

Our Association has not taken any position on the proposed increases in the rates for first, second and third class mail, although, like other businesses, we make considerable use of these classes of mail. My purpose in appearing before your Committee this morning, Mr. Chairman, is to bring to your attention what we consider to be disproportionate and unjustified increases, under Section 8 of H. R. 11140, in the fourth class rates which provide for the transmission through the mails of educational and library materials, including audio-visual materials such as educational and religious films, filmstrips, slides, transparencies and similar items.

Schools, churches and other users of educational materials have been greatly aided by the special postal rates for books, films and other audio-visual materials which have been in effect for some years. The postage charges on audio-visual materials are almost invariably paid by the schools and other organizations who use them. We feel that Congress has materially aided in the exchange of educational materials by means of this constructive and enlightened public policy.

122% INCREASE PROPOSED

The law currently provides that books, educational tests, films and certain other types of educational materials may be mailed under the "educational materials" rate, which is 9¢ for the first pound and 5¢ for each additional pound. A "library materials" rate of 4¢ for the first pound and 1¢ for each additional pound applies to books, films, filmstrips and other audio-visual materials when these are sent to or from schools, libraries, churches and similar non-profit groups.

The legislation now under consideration by your Committee would increase the "educational materials" rate to 10¢ for the first pound and 6¢ for each additional pound. Figuring the average parcel for this particular classification of mail, which according to the Post Office Department weighs slightly over five pounds, this means that the postage would be increased from 29¢ to 34¢. This is an increase of about 17%.

Figured on the same basis, the increase for the "library materials" category is a very much greater percentage. An average parcel of between five and six pounds which at present would mail for 9¢ would, under the proposed new rate, cost 20¢, an increase of 122%.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to emphasize that these proposed rate increases will be paid largely by schools, churches and other non-profit organizations. It is difficult to understand why an increase of 122% must apply to the library materials rate used by these non-profit organizations when the Congress has designated in the Postal Policy Act of 1958 that this is a public service function of the Post Office Department.

EDUCATORS OPPOSE INCREASES

Mr. Chairman, I would like to emphasize that the materials which are being shipped under these two rates are primarily educational and cultural in nature, and I would submit that this is not the time to place any handicaps on the wide distribution of such materials. Books and educational films must play an increasingly important part in our national life if our country is to meet the challenges of greatly increased scientific education, and more effective education generally, which have been posed by recent international developments. As a matter of fact, just two years ago the House of Representatives and the Congress specifically recognized the importance of audio-visual materials when it passed the National Defense Education Act, which as you know provides Federal matching money for the purchase of educational materials and equipment for the teaching of science, mathematics and modern foreign languages. As a result of this well designed and effective legislation, schools are today using many more instructional materials than ever before, and I can assure you that the result is going to be better education for our children.

However, the proposed increases will seriously inhibit the circulation of such materials, and will actually reduce the amounts of materials available. To show these effects, with your permission, Mr. Chairman, I should like to introduce three letters from educators who are intimately familiar with the circulation and utilization of audio-visual materials.

The first of these is from Dr. George W. Ormsby, Consultant in the Bureau of Audio-Visual and School Library Education of the California State Department of Education in Sacramento. He writes:

"I have just heard that a House Post Office Committee is considering certain changes in both the library materials rate and the educational materials rate. Since Harry Skelly is on an official trip to Hawaii at the present time, I am writing you in regard to this matter.

"From the audio-visual standpoint where we use the library materials rate of four cents for the first pound and one cent for each additional pound, we would stand to lose approximately \$50,000 in the State of California, money that is now being channeled into the purchase of audio-visual materials such as films, filmstrips, etc.

"Every district in the State of California has audio-visual services supplied by the county office. Sometimes they may be on a cooperative basis. Some of the very rural counties must depend entirely upon mailing instructional materials to their schools each day. In a county like Humboldt, the estimated change would increase mailing costs almost 300%, or from \$1,000 a year to almost \$4,000. Even in counties that have truck delivery service, there would be an estimated increase of about

\$1,000 since the audio-visual departments have to pay all postage on purchases of new materials and postage for preview materials. Also, we have an inter-county free loan system on films in which, for instance, any county in the San Joaquin Valley can borrow materials from any of the other counties and the only cost involved is postage. An increase in postage rates could make it practically impossible to continue this very effective type of cooperation.

"From the standpoint of the State Department of Education and the State Department of Corrections where we both maintain distribution libraries to other State Agencies, this item would increase our cooperative postage budget by well over \$1,500. This again, of necessity, would restrict our services to the various State Agencies in California since the tax dollar is very difficult to come by.

"The demands on educational institutions within this State are increasing at a very high rate, especially in view of the fact that there is so much more to teach than we can ever hope to teach by the conventional methods. Therefore, we are forced to use audio-visual materials to their greatest potential for instruction in order that our students will have the opportunity of learning about new developments when they happen instead of waiting for five years for a textbook to be published. Any increase in the cost of such a service would be to the detriment of maintaining an up-to-date educational instructional materials program within this State.

"If there is anything that you can do to bring this to the attention of the Committee, it will be appreciated by all educators in California, as well as throughout the United States."

Garland C. Bagley, Director of the Audio-Visual Service, State Department of Education, Atlanta, Georgia, has submitted the following statement for your record:

"In Georgia we have been able to build the largest Audio-Visual Program in the country by taking advantage of the present postal rates on library materials.

"With everyone trying to do everything possible to improve the schools throughout the nation, I am greatly alarmed at the prospect of the library rate on these materials being increased since it will greatly handicap expansion of the Audio-Visual Program in Georgia. I understand that the increase will amount to one-hundred per cent or more on an average five-pound parcel, and that would, without doubt, more than double our present amount for postage and would naturally cut down on the number of films that we could buy and send to the public schools of the state.

"We respectfully request that more than close consideration be given to any increase in postal rates that directly affect the libraries and the audio-visual services throughout the country that have to depend upon parcel post for transportation of materials. At the present time we are spending approximately \$28,000 to \$30,000 each year for postage on film parcels sent to and returned by the schools of our state. With a fixed

budget that is threatened to be cut in view of decreasing state revenues, an increase that would more than double the present amount of postage would greatly jeopardize Georgia's Audio-Visual Program. With this increase on library materials and educational materials affecting the field of education more than any other group, we would like to urge that no increase in postal rates for these materials be made anytime in the near future.

"We will greatly appreciate the careful consideration of any increase in these postal rates that primarily affect the educational system of our country."

My third letter is from Lee W. Cochran, of the Extension Division, State University of Iowa, Iowa City. He writes that:

"It has come to my attention that the U. S. House of Representatives is considering a bill which would increase the rate of mailing educational "Library Materials" and "Educational Materials".

"I am writing in defense of the present rate on mailing "Library Materials" and "Educational Materials" which allows shipment of educational motion pictures, filmstrips, slides, microfilms, sound recordings and catalogs listing such educational materials.

"The wide distribution of all types of projected materials for educational purposes in the classrooms of this country is of great importance to the educational progress of the future. This low cost distribution of all materials coming under "Library Materials" at present, greatly encourages the schools to use a wider variety of educational films and other audio-visual

materials.

"I have estimated that if the proposed increase made in the shipment of such educational materials is passed, schools in Iowa would be spending approximately \$20,000 additional from their educational budgets to mail the films and visual materials used in this state alone. This would no doubt mean that the schools would be using less educational projected materials if this bill includes an increase in the cost of mailing such materials. As you can see, this would be especially harmful to the small schools who depend upon their projected materials from libraries in either State Departments of Public Instruction, colleges or universities."

A RECOGNIZED PUBLIC SERVICE FUNCTION

According to information which has been released by the Post Office Department, it is estimated that the revenue to the Post Office on books and other educational materials amounts to about 61% of the cost of handling this class of mail. Under the Postal Policy Act of 1958 (Public Law 85-426), revenue deficiencies incurred by the Post Office Department under the educational materials and library materials rates shall be reimbursed from the general funds of the Treasury, as a public service appropriation. These reimbursements totaled \$16 million

in fiscal year 1960.

In addition, the President's 1961 budget proposed, and the House and Senate have already approved, in the Treasury-Post Office Appropriation Bill for 1961, a \$19 million item for the same purpose. Therefore, in effect, the Post Office Department has already been guaranteed by the Congress the full cost of handling educational materials and library materials until June 30, 1961. I should like to point out to your Committee that if the proposed rate increases for these two categories were to be approved by the Congress, it would have no effect on the Post Office Department deficit for the 1961 fiscal year.

My whole point, Mr. Chairman, is that the proposed increases, particularly on the "library materials" rate, amount more to a change in the basic philosophy on the transmission of these materials than they do to a mere rate increase. If there is to be a general postal rate increase, it seems to me that educational and library materials should be considered in relation to other classes of mail which have an educational and informational function, such as the reading matter in magazines and newspapers under second class mail.

According to the figures which the Post Office Department has presented to your Committee, reading matter in second class mail is paying a much lower proportion of its cost than are educational materials.

I have here a set of booklets which explain the immense values of audio-visual education. With your permission I would like to pass these out to the members of the Committee. If you will look through them at your convenience I believe you will agree with me that the continued inexpensive circulation of 16mm films and other audio-visual materials, along with all of the other types of necessary educational materials, is particularly important in view of the educational crisis which our country faces today.

I know your Committee will want to think about the importance of our educational problem in considering the proposed increase. I know you will want to bear in mind that even if the presently proposed inequitable increases in the educational and library materials rates are enacted, the increase in revenue would be just about 1% of the estimated postal deficit of \$554 million.

I believe that the effect of the increase on the wide transmission of educational and library materials throughout the United States will damage our educational system to a degree far out of proportion to the possible benefits in increased revenue which could be gained by the Post Office Department.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I wish to thank you on behalf of the National Audio-Visual Association for the privilege of appearing before your Committee. If you have any questions about the matters I have mentioned, I shall be very glad to do my best to answer them.