

*Post Office Act*

these increases would bring with them a rise of approximately 275 per cent, compared with the costs which we have been used to.

I know that the postal rate increases are severe, but are they that severe?

Recently I saw a financial report relating to the Southam news services. The report shows that the publishers increased their revenue during the first nine months of this year by approximately 15 per cent. I think we ought to be more concerned about publications other than daily papers which may need assistance, and there are many like that. I am thinking particularly of publications such as the Canadian Church Press and the daily and weekly newspapers that are entirely or almost entirely dependent on mail subscriptions for their circulation and, likewise, for their advertising revenue. The revenue of such publications cannot equal, on any proportionate basis, that of the huge dailies.

There are others, too, who must be mentioned at this time, and here I am thinking of the members of the Canadian direct mail association. I know that many in this house and in this country regard direct advertising circulars that are delivered through the mail as a nuisance which ought to be curtailed. Those who think that way are not interested in the case for direct mail advertising. That is not the point here. Regardless of whether we are sympathetic toward the grievances of this body, we must bear in mind that its members take part in legitimate Canadian enterprises and they are entitled to the same consideration that is extended to other individual Canadians or groups of citizens. In this body are Canadians who have a vested interest in the postal service of their country. In all fairness and decency we ought to give them an opportunity to be heard.

Nothing in the constitution or in the Canada Elections Act transforms the Postmaster General or any other cabinet minister into a god. He is responsible for his actions to the people who entrusted him with the task of providing a postal service with their money, and he ought to have enough sense of responsibility to listen to submissions before imposing radical new changes on the post office. I see no argument against hearing the case for the defence unless someone in high places is afraid to. A consideration of the changes encompassed in this bill along the lines suggested by my colleague for Hillsborough ought to be the minimum amount of justice that the cabinet and the Postmaster General should extend to us. After all, the Postmaster

[Mr. McCutcheon.]

General is a public servant. Anything he does he does by permission of and in the interests of the public who entrusted him with his job.

The minister's actions might be more understandable if he were running a private company. Then he could make such arbitrary changes as his judgment told him to be in the interest of the company and its shareholders. In this instance the minister is playing God. He is saying in fact; I know what is good for you; shut up and take it. That is a most highhanded and democratic attitude for a government not noted for being sensitive to the rights of individual Canadians to take.

• (5:30 p.m.)

Compare this attitude with the approach of the United Kingdom when the British post office department was recently overhauled. The legislation there envisages a national users' council representing all those who use the mails in Britain. This council will make representations about services, it will consider complaints by users of the services and it will be consulted with regard to fees and rates. It is, therefore, more than a body having only nominal functions; it will be truly consultative and effective in its operations. The minister will appoint the chairman and members of the council and is responsible for policy direction. This is an entirely different approach from what we see here in Canada where in effect the government says: Here it is; take it and like it.

The minister is actually following a course which in my opinion could well lead to silencing those voices which this country most needs to hear. They are voices with which all Canadians do not agree. They are voices of dissent, voices which express varying points of view. They are voices which represent minority views, voices speaking for the many segments of our society which must eventually be reconciled if we are to remain a strong, united nation. They are voices which symbolize what democracy is all about.

These voices are heard in many publications which happen to be among those most closely affected by the proposed changes in postal services and rates. Some of these publications face distinction as a result of these proposals. Their spokesmen must be allowed to make representations fairly and openly before any step is taken which will still these publications forever. I think of the case I mentioned earlier, the case of the French language newspaper *Le Devoir* and the clear, if sometimes jarring, voice of its editor, Claude