

Post Office Act

Mr. Speaker the shipping costs will double, which is simply unacceptable, considering that already with the present rates, most dailies and weeklies can hardly manage. This legislation means the death in a more or less distant future of all papers distributed free of charge.

Those newspapers will have to resort to advertisement or to have advertising pages that will also be business pages, as they have to have some kind of financing. This will lead to an increase in the cost of living.

I should like to mention a few weekly newspapers that will be affected by this measure: the Sorel *La Voie métropolitaine* and *Le Courrier Riviera*, the Granby *La nouvelle Revue*, the Asbestos *Le Citoyen*, the Shawinigan *Écho du St-Maurice*, the Baie Comeau *Le Nordic*, the Farnham *L'Avenir*, the Grand-Mère *Le Courrier de Laviolette*, the La Tuque *L'Écho de La Tuque*, the Mont-Joli *Mont-Joli Nouvelles*, the Rimouski *Le Rimouskois*, the Lotbinière county *La Voix de Lotbinière*, the Victoriaville *La Voix des Bois Francs*, the Shawinigan *La Voix de Shawinigan*, the Nicolet *Courrier Sud*, the Abitibi *L'Écho Abitibien*, the Rouyn *La Frontière*, the Sherbrooke *Le Journal de Sherbrooke*.

There is still a huge number of newspapers across Canada I did not mention, Mr. Speaker. Those newspapers will have to bow out and disappear because the Postmaster General decided his department would not have a deficit. In my opinion, this is unacceptable and I think that we should remedy this situation or consider it further.

The Canadian weeklies are prepared to accept a certain increase in their postal rates but certainly not an increase which would double or triple the price at one go. I say, Mr. Speaker, that it is quite unacceptable.

Bill No. C-116 now under consideration provides for an increase of 20 per cent in the postal rate of letters and first class mail. It is a pill which can be swallowed and even digested over a long period, but in the case of weeklies which are delivered free, the increase in the charges would amount to 333 per cent. Is this sensible?

The areas mostly affected are the rural areas which, are reached as we know by weeklies only. Often we hear complaints about the lack of information in some rural areas of Canada. Do you think, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation will improve the situation?

[Mr. Beaudoin.]

Do we have the right to deprive a great part of our population of information? Will this lack of information make for a people aware of its responsibilities, aware of all the problems which require a solution? Who will inform those people on current problems, who will describe to them truthfully the political and economical situation of our country? Some may be led to believe that they will only have to listen to the radio. Yes, of course, they should listen to the radio, but to hear only one side of a question, is that true democracy?

Today, state-owned television is in direct competition with other information media; that state-owned corporation enjoys tremendous advantages. Its deficits are made up out of the government's budget but, Mr. Speaker, I am asking you, what is the government doing for Canadian weeklies?

Mr. Speaker, to conclude, I want to stress the fact that Bill No. C-116 as proposed by the Postmaster General will inevitably bring about the disappearance of many weeklies and other newspapers which, as I said earlier, are absolutely necessary to keep fully informed Canadians who should not be forced to hear only one side of current events.

The soul and education of the Canadian people should not be distorted by a bill designed to balance a budget.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the government to reconsider its decision and refer Bill No. C-116 to a standing committee.

[English]

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the amendment moved by my colleague the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), the purport of which is that the proposed legislation now before this house be referred to a committee of the house for further consideration.

While the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) is to be admired for his efforts to save money and streamline our postal operations it seems to me, sir, that slashing an essential public service is a muddleheaded way of doing things. Though I am extremely pleased the Postmaster General has bowed to the pressures exerted by hon. members on this side of the house and others to abandon his plan to discontinue Saturday deliveries in rural areas, I am unable to support the legislation now before the house.