

Hon. Mr. BLONDIN: I will withdraw that.

Right Hon. Sir GEORGE E. FOSTER: I think we are all indebted to the honourable gentleman for the statement of facts that he has put before us. I was his colleague when these improvements were being made, and I remember very well how carefully we examined the whole subject. We commenced with the newspapers, as almost a dead burden upon the finances and revenues of the Post Office. We arranged, as my honourable friend has stated, for a gradual increase towards something like remunerative rates, with the idea that in time the newspapers—commercial undertakings—should pay at least the bare cost of their carriage through the mail. Why should we at this particular time take a backward step and diminish the revenues of this country? I cannot conceive why it should be done. We have had two or three examples of that. The treaties which we have made have brought about, according to the confession of the Finance Minister himself, a loss to us in direct revenue of \$850,000, but when you take into account their probable effect you find that for the benefit of those treaties we are losing a revenue of about \$1,000,000, and that loss must be made up from taxation in this country. Now you throw off \$200,000 and for what reason? For the benefit of the newspapers, who to-day have the softest thing in the whole transport system carried on by the Post Office Department, and are paying but a mere fraction of what they cost. Why is it that the Government proposes at this particular time to throw away revenues in cases like that, when it is increasing the debt and taxation of the country from year to year and from time to time? Surely this is the most unsuitable time to take a backward step, and surely the rates on newspapers ought to be the last to be reduced when they are only a fair charge, in view of the cost of carriage. I am entirely in sympathy with the expressions of my honourable colleague, and I hope that the Minister will not press this Bill.

Hon. F. B. BLACK: I want to say a few words on this question. I have listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks made by the honourable ex-Postmaster General (Hon. Mr. Blondin), and I am entirely in accord with everything he has said. I know there has been a considerable canvass made of all those interested in newspapers, in an endeavour to get them to assist in the reduction of the rate. I want to say, further, that I am interested in newspapers in my own province to a small extent, and if this reduction came into effect it would mean for our papers down

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there a saving of several thousand dollars a year.

Further, I want to say that this is a time when we need every dollar of revenue we can get. We had a Bill before us to-night which, if we had passed it, would have given a certain class of people about \$200,000. I am not finding any fault with the action taken in this House on that Bill, but we decided that we would not give that \$200,000 to that class of people; yet by this Bill we are proposing to take from our revenue \$200,000 without any justification whatever.

I have only been in the newspaper game three or four years, but before I was interested in it, I had felt, and said on many occasions, that the newspapers of the country had been carried at the expense of everybody else. A poor man who wants to send a letter pays 3 cents, or at the rate of 48 cents a pound for his letters, while a newspaper has been going for a quarter of a cent a pound up to one and a quarter or one and a half cents a pound—an absolutely unjustifiable proposition from every standpoint. There are certain large newspapers that would save a considerable amount of money, running anywhere from \$50 a year up to \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year on the most largely circulated papers in Canada. It has been stated, and I maintain falsely stated, that if this Bill went into effect it would be in the interest of the small newspapers of the country. In my opinion, and in that of any person who has knowledge of the small country newspaper that goes out twice a week, or weekly, or even daily, instead of this Bill being a benefit it would throttle them, because it would give an opportunity to the large papers which circulate not only weekly but daily through the country because of their enormous advertising possibilities, to circulate through the country districts and shut out the small paper.

So far as I am concerned, regardless of the personal element, I do not think there is one argument in favour of the Bill, and I hope the Government will withdraw it. I would be very glad indeed to second a motion for the six months' hoist.

Hon. Mr. McLENNAN: I would like the ex-Postmaster General to state whether the suggestion has been considered of charging newspapers on such a basis as they do in the parcel post?

Hon. Mr. BLONDIN: Yes, but that would be very costly and impracticable in Canada. It is done in the United States, but on account of our small population and the large area of the country it was found impracticable here.