

Post Office Act

since we feel this bill is unjust, we rise in spite of the fact that this is a majority government, and we are standing for newspapers, like the *Sherbrooke Tribune*, that never say a word about us, newspapers reaching places like Plessisville and Thetford Mines and newspapers like *Le Devoir*. Those newspapers had hoped for the coming into power of this majority government. As for us, accustomed as we are to be accused from all sides, we still say that Bill No. C-116, as introduced by the Postmaster General, is unjust and that is why we ask that it be referred for a more thorough consideration, so that the necessary amendments may be made.

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, as some of my colleagues who stated their views on this motion, I would like to underline a few other points.

When, on October 8, the minister brought in his resolution, I had already mentioned the unpopular reaction about Bill No. C-116. I remember that when I stated my point of view, no newspaper mentioned it and this is why we are somewhat astonished at such an insistence by those who, in this house, are going to the aid of the newspapers which objected; they have just understood that they should object. The alarm was sounded right away and they have just understood that we were right when we objected and that it was not just empty words. I would like to take up certain statements of the hon. member for Trois-Rivières (Mr. Mongrain) who is not here at the present time. I would have like him to be here.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières is well known for his verbal acrobatics, and he hurled yesterday some untimely invectives against the leader of the Ralliement Créditiste (Mr. Caouette). However, we are used to that, and we simply continue to express our views freely.

For this reason, I remain very happy to belong to a party whose members are truly free and can express and reflect exactly the views of their constituents. The hon. member for Trois-Rivières has told us that he holds to the basic principle that those who use the service are the ones who should pay. We should determine who these users are. The hon. member for Trois-Rivières seems to think that the users are those who send newspapers, parcels and letters; however, that is not the only point to be considered. The fact is that newspapers are not a luxury; the publishers and those who receive newspapers must pay the cost.

There are areas—and this is the case in my district—where television is non-existent and radio almost non-existent too. Such a situation exists in the northern part of the district of Champlain, La Tuque and up to Parent. The newspaper is then the only means of information for the people of these areas. As a matter of fact, every family does get a newspaper; newspapers are very popular there. It is already rather expensive for the people to have to pay \$20, \$25 and \$30 for the subscription to their newspaper. If the cost of the service is going to be passed on to the readers—as obviously the cost of subscriptions will be increased after this legislation has been passed—it is once more the people who will have to pay. Therefore, at first sight, the hon. member for Trois-Rivières seems to be sensible when he says that the users will foot the bill, but if you take a closer look at the situation, you realize that the users are everybody. So, let us be careful in that regard.

I come back to the arguments which I put forward early in October to the effect that it is truly a public service and that if the Post Office Department used to pay its way, why can it not do so today? We should seek the reasons which make the Post Office Department uneconomical. What are the true reasons? If the Post Office Department acts as a milk cow for other departments, of course it will show deficits. Planning or administration may be lacking, then let us consider the matter further. That is why we support the motion to refer this bill to a committee, because the question should be considered in depth, we should get more information and find out what methods are used in the operation of the Post Office. I should like to see an attempt made so that the Post Office Department would become economical. In my opinion, what prevents it from paying its way is simply mismanagement. We should correct that mismanagement instead of increasing the cost of the postal service.

● (5:00 p.m.)

As the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) suggested yesterday, if, at least, we were sure that next year we shall not be told: Unfortunately, the Post Office Department once more is in the red, the postal rates will have to be raised again. If, indeed, we were sure that the service will pay its way, but even that certainty is not available. Past experience demonstrates beyond doubt that this never happens and that the rates increase constantly.