

*Post Office Act*

Semi-weekly and tri-weekly newspapers are considered, for our purposes here, as daily newspapers. They have never had pre-zoning privileges, and in that sense nothing is being taken away from them.

**Mr. Yewchuk:** Mr. Chairman, I wish to speak on behalf of some who have hardly been mentioned so far, the residents of the north. They live in extreme isolation, keeping in touch with the outside world mainly by newspaper. They have little access to radio or television and often cannot be reached by road. The amenities we in southern Canada take for granted are non-existent for these people. I am speaking particularly of the residents of northern Alberta. Their main link with civilization is by way of a newspaper.

The new rates announced with respect to daily newspapers will mean that the cost of these newspapers will be increased. In some instances newspapers will more than double in price. For example, newspapers which sell yearly for \$15 will now cost \$35 on a subscription basis. I am referring to one newspaper in particular.

**Mr. Kierans:** May I ask the hon. member a question? Is he thinking of the *Edmonton Journal*?

**Mr. Yewchuk:** Yes. Many who live in our isolated northern areas live almost on the poverty line and cannot afford to have the cost of their newspaper doubled. Is it fair to penalize such people, when one considers that newspapers are their main link with civilization?

It is true that many weekly newspapers are published in the north, and many of these will not be affected by the increased rates. But such newspapers do not carry the daily news and daily happenings in the world at large. I submit that special consideration ought to be given to those living in isolated areas.

I submit that periodicals and weekly publications such as religious magazines also ought to be considered. Generally speaking they are non-profit publications. Increasing their postage rates will have an adverse effect. After all, the dissemination of religious news is good for the country and for its inhabitants. An increase in second class mail rates will certainly have an adverse effect on those publications. They are non-profit making. Their publishers also desire the widest possible distribution in order to reach as many people as possible. Some of those who are receiving such publications at the present time may not

be willing to increase their payments. This is another case which I believe should receive special consideration. To sum up, I make a plea for special consideration for those living in the north and for those who are receiving religious publications.

• (2:50 p.m.)

**Mr. McIntosh:** Mr. Chairman, my main reason for speaking on this bill is to protest not only against the proposed increase in the postal rates but against the policy of the department in closing down a large number of rural post offices, particularly in the prairie provinces.

I say "departmental policy" deliberately. I refrained from calling it the minister's policy because I believe the minister is a hostage of his own department and officials. He is a captive of his bureaucrats and he has been sold a bill of goods by them which he has swallowed hook, line and sinker. He is now trying to sell the same bill of goods to the Canadian public. Actually this bill of goods is a red herring to cover the excessive spending of the government over the past several years. The minister has been conned into using his department as a vehicle for replenishing the federal treasury in lieu of a direct tax by the Minister of Finance. In other words, it is being used as a vehicle for the imposition of a hidden tax on the public of Canada.

I was surprised last night to hear some of the remarks made by the Postmaster General. I do not have time to refer to all of them. In my view the most astonishing remark he made is that reported on page 2003 of *Hansard* where we find the minister saying:

It is my belief that the post office should charge those people for whom it renders service... These are charges to the people who are using the services. They are not like taxes which are imposed and where an individual has no alternative but to pay them.

I would say that an individual has no choice but to pay the tax which the minister is imposing. If the policy advocated by the minister had been followed over the years, I ask, Mr. Chairman, whether the west would ever have been developed. Remote areas have always enjoyed postal service. For the minister to say that everyone who uses the service must pay for it implies discrimination. I believe there has been a change in government policy as announced by the Postmaster General. It has a familiar ring. Not too long ago the Minister of National Revenue who is also, I believe, in charge of our national parks, made a statement along exactly the