

Post Office Act

There are a few points which I should like to ask the minister to consider. Can he give us some assurance that he will take another look at the publications to which I have referred. I do not believe that rigidity in the bill at this particular time is something which medical, professional and union publications should be expected to bear.

The minister has mentioned that this is a small increase from the standpoint of the individual who is subscribing to the particular papers. I suggest, however, that we should not consider this as just one particular item. Every increase on every item in respect of consumer costs, and the interest rates with which the farmers will now be faced, contributes to the increase in the over-all cost of living index. This brings about a spiralling increase in the rising cost of living. It is not a matter of saying that this is just one item, it is the many things put together that we must take into consideration.

I would ask the minister again, when he answers later on, to inform us whether the railways were deliberately left out of the mail carrying contracts or whether they asked to be relieved from such contracts. I am sure this could be handled under one of the items which are before us.

[Translation]

Mr. La Salle: Mr. Chairman, I take this opportunity, now that my turn has come, to say a few words about such an important and controversial bill.

I am convinced that the Postmaster General is not happy to lead such a delicate and difficult attack against Canadian voters, I am perfectly aware that the minister has inherited a very difficult post. I am ready to sympathize with him to a certain extent. I even ask myself if the previous government which ignored the findings of the Montpetit Commission is not responsible for the present minister's increasing difficulties.

I suppose that it is not too late however to ask the minister to show better understanding and I think that, in the name of common sense, we will be able at this stage of the bill to score a few points in the public interest.

I noticed this afternoon that government members were overjoyed by the defeat of the amendment. However I am convinced that all members are not willing to impose such heavy increases on small taxpayers. Of course, the minister is perfectly right on certain points, but I wonder how high increases as those proposed can be generalized.

[Mr. Skoberg.]

I have not yet agreed that the Post Office Department must pay its own way at the expense of the quality of services rendered to the people. It has become generally accepted in various administration that one department can show a deficit which can be covered by others or out of the consolidated revenue fund.

I suppose that the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) must consider in the first place the services to be rendered to the community before trying to make his department profitable. As he is now bringing in the bill, the present minister is only considering whether his department is economic, and I wonder if he is right. I understand that he is used to handling figures and he is well versed in financial matters, but I would like to assure the minister that the Canadian people do not understand so easily the importance of an increase.

I cannot refrain from defending the situation of weeklies, since we are lucky enough to have in my constituency four weeklies which are quite well organized and render tremendous services to the people. I quite agree with the hon. member who said yesterday that those weeklies are even more useful than television and that if the bill is passed, we shall be deprived of a number of weeklies, which would be unfortunate indeed. On behalf of those weeklies, in my district as well as all over Canada, I tell the minister that I hope he will be sensible enough to change his position and to give particular consideration to this class of mail which is absolutely necessary in all areas so that they can get adequate information.

A little while ago, I asked the minister a question to which I would very much have liked to receive an answer. I asked him if, in view of the information received to the effect that Saturday was the worst day of the week to cancel postal delivery, another day of the week could be considered? I should like the minister to consider this, if he has not already done so. I should think that Wednesday, for instance, in the middle of the week, would be less damageable. I am not saying that it would suit everyone, but somehow I feel that a day in the middle of the week would be more acceptable to everyone. I make this suggestion because I think the members of the opposition should not be content to say no, for the fun of it: they should try to suggest an alternative. I thought of this suggestion, and after discussing it with several people, it seems to me a day in the middle