

*Post Office Act*

Senior post office officials may be very competent to advise the minister on the technicalities of letter carrying, delivering and so on but I submit that they are not competent to advise him on the public's wishes regarding this essential service. This has been demonstrated all too well so far. More than that, these senior advisers, I submit, are not competent to weigh adequately the long range effects of the minister's proposals with respect to rate increases.

Many representations have been made by weekly newspapers, daily newspapers and other organizations. I have one in front of me from the graphic arts industry. No doubt the minister has received these representations and so I will not take up the time of the house to go into them. However, these industries and the press have indicated that there may well be very disagreeable effects over the long-range as a result of the minister's proposals.

Recently I received representations from what I would describe as a weekly newspaper although in fact it is published twice a week. This kind of publication will not receive the same advantages under the proposed legislation as papers which are published only once a week. But for all practical purposes this kind of publication is a weekly newspaper. Things like this should be examined carefully.

Reference has already been made to an editorial written by Claude Ryan, who is well known to members of the house. In it he pointed out the danger to Canadian publications. I do not feel that the minister's advisers in the postal department are really able to advise him as well as other people in this country on the possible damage to Canadian identity by the loss of Canadian publications as a result of his proposals. Canadian identity is an important thing in our country at present. There is the possibility of the loss of valuable editorial opinion from the smaller papers.

We have seen recently how the big newspaper chains are growing. An example is the acquisition of the *Gazette* by one chain. The big daily newspapers seem to be falling into just two hands in Canada, and in the future we may well need the valuable opinion of smaller newspapers simply because the larger ones will have fallen into two hands which, I might add, may be a dangerous situation.

For these reasons the minister would be well advised to let this bill go to a committee. I cannot understand his rush. He has never

explained it. He has mentioned November 1, and I understand that some of the proposed new rates will go into effect next February or March. Certainly a few weeks delay in passage of the bill could be entertained. As a matter of fact, if the minister would agree to send it to a committee he might suggest directly or indirectly through the committee chairman that a deadline be placed on the committee hearings.

Perhaps the minister is still considering sending the bill to a committee. If he does the committee could consider something else, although this might be gone into during committee stage in the house. I refer to the question of proper accounting by the postal department. I do not profess to be a chartered accountant although I have had some training in that regard, but the post office method of accounting seems strange. Of course government methods of accounting are always peculiar, particularly railway accounting, but the post office accounting is odd. All mail that goes out from government departments under frank is charged to the post office, which gives the appearance that the Post Office Department is bearing all this weight for other departments.

● (4:00 p.m.)

This is not a proper costing method. I believe it should be looked into. This point has been alluded to by other hon. members in this debate. My feeling is that we are not being shown a really accurate picture of the finances of the post office. The minister speaks of the great losses. There probably are losses, but I am wondering whether they are being accurately presented and whether they may not be as great as it is suggested they are.

The suggestion is made that we should pass this measure and get on with the budget. These proposed postal increases really are nothing but another aspect of the budget because these increases in effect subsidize other government departments. This certainly has an effect on the general finances of the country. I cannot see the need for haste in this regard.

The wishes of the people in the rural areas with regard to the six day week have been made very evident. I congratulate the minister for acceding to the wishes of the public in this regard. About 60 per cent of my constituency is urban and the other 40 per cent is rural. Never during the 15 years I have been