

Post Office Act

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have also had in 1966 the Montpetit report. I quote:

As a result of persistent uneasiness within the Post Office Department, the government set up a royal commission of inquiry on working conditions in the postal service, known as the Montpetit Commission. That commission submitted its report in October 1966. Amongst its 282 recommendations—

This excerpt reveals how disorganized the department is. The commission made several recommendations about the advisability of turning that department into a crown corporation.

All that goes to prove without any doubt, Mr. Speaker, that the problem now facing us is a basic one. It is a matter of whether the Post Office Department should remain and continue to operate as it does now, that is as a government department, or if it should be turned into a crown corporation with a mixed economy.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that it would be stupid for hon. member to pass the present bill when they know that before long everything will have to be done over again, because the present structure of the Post Office Department will be obsolete. It must be adjusted to the conditions of a modern economy.

Mr. Speaker, this point deserves a thorough study, so that it is possible to decide whether every dollar taken from the taxpayer is well invested and brings in the maximum return.

I think there is a great deal of waste in the federal administration. The budget speech of last night proved it clearly, with its deficit of \$760 million; it is a proof that our economy is in recession. That is why Canadian taxpayers are looking towards this parliament from which they expect immediate solutions.

However, Mr. Speaker, they pass the time bringing in useless bills. Moreover, the minister has now the following alternatives: either act as an administrator or put money first and tell us: "The Post Office Department must at all costs avoid a deficit." Such a position could be justified; I admit, but if at the same time the minister interferes with the basic rights of each Canadian citizen to be informed, I say that he does not then merely deal with a moral problem but also with an administrative matter and that he must alter his positions.

What astonishes me, because I always held him for a trustworthy man, is that the minister is always trying to force the opposition to side with the financial powers, instead of siding with the people. This beats me and I cannot understand it. The opposition would

[Mr. Fortin.]

have to be blind to allow a bill like this to pass.

Mr. Speaker, my impression is that this bill has been drafted by high officials of the Post Office Department, who have abandoned their own rights as citizens, in order to enter the civil service. They have no political opinions other than those of the government which they consider to be the best, and they say to the minister that it is absolutely necessary to do this. Then the minister says: that is how it must be. Our minister is a blind man guided by other blind men and when a blind man is guided by blind men, only one thing can happen: people are knocked about and deprived of their fundamental rights.

When we read the many telegrams we receive every day from all parts of Canada, when we read the briefs, the newspaper articles, and the letters we receive, when we meet people, we realize that, from coast to coast, there is a general outcry against the bill since it puts the cart before the horse, and asks us to take a stand even though we do not know exactly whether the Post Office Department should not change its constitution.

I refer here to a very interesting editorial published in the October 17, 1968 edition of the Quebec newspaper *Le Soleil*, and signed by Mr. Raymond Dubé, an excellent journalist who confirms what I have just said, and I quote:

From the strictly economic point of view, the attitude taken by the Post Office Department is understandable, but its position becomes absolutely unjustified and untenable when it places the economic soundness of a state-provided service above the respect for a principle as unquestioned today as the obligation for a democratic government to ensure that the whole population can fully exercise its right to be informed and to eliminate anything which may directly or indirectly interfere with that right.

At this stage, I should like to state, with supportive evidence, that the bill now under consideration is interfering very seriously with this fundamental right to information of every Canadian citizen.

Mr. Speaker, there is another point which I must make at this stage of the debate. It concerns the extremely critical situation of Canadian weeklies, and particularly those of Quebec, which are small papers with small resources and which, in many cases, are the only real source of information available to the population.

Mr. Speaker, I have here an editorial taken from the October 16 edition of the paper *L'Union*, which is published in the Eastern