

Post Office Act

considerable time as head of the Montreal Stock Exchange, an institution that might easily be equated with the temple of profit. I am delighted, however, to see that obviously the Postmaster General has taken note of some of the message and that he is now operating within the demands of a just society; nothing could be more unjust than to put an essential public service beyond the reach of ordinary people. Furthermore, I believe that the concept that government should make a profit from a public service is not only misguided but flies in the face of our theory of government, a theory that supposes that the chief purpose of government is to guard the interests of the people and to supply their needs.

Having said this, Mr. Speaker, I also believe that the Postmaster General deserves some credit. While he may be misguided in his efforts he has tried to break the spend-thrift pattern set by many of his colleagues. He at least professes to want to save money; the rest of them make no such pretence. I am thinking now of the expenditures that have gone into providing the Oriental splendour of the new offices of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene), the so-called "Greene rooms". In case any other ministers try to take comfort from mention of only one of their number, let me hasten to assure them, that it is not too difficult to collect instances of general extravagance and disregard for public moneys by members of this government.

I sincerely hope, that the house will see fit to adopt the suggestion of my colleague, the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). I think that justice demands that before such arbitrary and sweeping changes are made in a vitally necessary public service every interested citizen should be heard.

• (5:20 p.m.)

It is quite true that the loudest and most vehement protest against some of the minister's proposals has come really from a group deserving the least sympathy. I am referring to the publishers of our Canadian daily newspapers, a group for whom it is difficult to have much sympathy. We were told by the minister, and we must take his word for it, that for years they have enjoyed a generous subsidy from Canadian taxpayers. If the minister's statement can be accepted at its face value, then the subsidy amounts to some \$37 million per year. Personally I question

the figure and the accuracy of the minister's statement.

I do not know whether the Postmaster General really understands the way small country post offices operate. I should like to know how a computer can determine the cost of handling a newspaper at some of our small country post offices. May I cite an example I am familiar with personally. Around five o'clock in the morning newspapers that go out on ordinary rural mail routes from the small post office are deposited on the front steps of the post office by a truck that comes from the London *Free Press*. These trucks deliver their newspapers to the front steps of our rural post offices. The papers are neatly bundled and addressed. They are already in some sort of order. So many are for rural route 2, so many for rural route 3, and so on.

Around eight o'clock the postmaster appears on the front steps, takes a deep breath of air, yawns probably, picks up the bundle of newspapers and takes them into the sorting room where they are placed on the rural carriers' desks. The carriers then pick up those newspapers. They have 10 papers for this route, 25 for another, and so on. The newspapers are in the hands of paid post office workers for a matter of minutes only. The rural carriers place the newspapers in their automobiles and deposit them at the rural mail boxes.

It must be remembered that these carriers are contractors and they are going to make their rounds anyway. I therefore submit that the cost of delivering 18,000 copies of the London *Free Press* in southwestern Ontario adds very little to the department's deficit. I cite this as an example to show that in my opinion the entire white paper is questionable. Yes, I would say that it is even suspect.

In the circumstances under which daily newspapers in Canada are published today perhaps our chief concern should be saved for others more in need of consideration, and here I speak of mail subscribers. I became alarmed when I heard the hon. member for Hillsborough mention the fantastic increases in subscription rates to be charged by the Winnipeg *Free Press*. I believe it was he who mentioned that newspaper. I believe others mentioned increases that would be applicable to newspapers such as the *Citizen* and the *Journal*.

Writing in *Le Devoir*, Mr. Ryan, the editor, said:

Quick calculations have allowed us to establish that in the case of a newspaper like *Le Devoir*