

*Post Office Act*

constituents and of all Canadians, and to discuss Bill No. C-116 now before us, amending the Post Office Act.

Mr. Speaker, first, I wish to remind members of the most important role played by journalists and newspapers in the Canadian society. The written press is the most important information medium in our great country at the present time. It truly reflects the opinion of the Canadian people. This information medium is the only one that can reach many Canadians, because many regions in our vast country are still hardly reached by radio or television. The written press is the only way to an all-round education for Canadians, since it conveys ideas and data of a political, financial, local, national, and international nature.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mather:** Mr. Speaker, could I rise to make a personal point? The interpretation system does not seem to be working and I am wondering whether the interpreters know this. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Would the hon. member like to continue and we will try to have the interpretation system adjusted.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Beaudoin:** Mr. Speaker, I feel that an honest newspaperman is an unmatched educator, since he can and truly has the means to convey ideas and information to the public at large. The current of ideas is within his reach and he can strongly influence its orientation. However, he must perforce be honest and he has a right to his information medium, namely the newspapers.

● (5:10 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, I think that if we recognize that newspapers are a means of informing and educating the people, we must also, consequently, protect them. I do not say we should protect the newspapers themselves, but the subscribers, so that they may get these newspapers at a reasonable price.

I have already said that newspapers are a means of educating people. They allow our young people to discover the problems which exist in the world today. From the age of six or seven on, Canadian children are reading newspapers. They are first interested in pictures, then in cartoons, and finally in local news and so on. Without newspapers, our children will develop late and will not become as attentive to the many aspects of our modern world.

The discovery of printing, as you must know, Mr. Speaker, caused a deep social upheaval. It has served to circulate ideas and has promoted education considerably especially in remote areas. It would be a heavy loss and a regression if all newspapers were to disappear, and it would be heavy going to look after the intellectual needs of our Canadian people, especially of those who live far from the great urban centres.

For all the reasons I have just given, Mr. Speaker, I think we, as legislators, cannot take the risk, to see all our newspapers disappear more or less rapidly, by imposing prohibitive and exorbitant postal rates.

I do understand that the hon. Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) wants his department to be solvent and I think this is the mark of a good administrator. However, Mr. Speaker, it is not enough to be a good administrator, it is also necessary to have a sense of balance and to think of the welfare of those who are under one's jurisdiction, in the present case, the Canadians and more particularly, the publishers.

The primary purpose of the Post Office Department is to serve the Canadian people and I think the minister is losing sight of this important goal. In fact, if this legislation is accepted by this house in its present form, the Post Office will become a luxury instead of a service for the people. I think therefore that every member will readily understand that we will forget about the Post Office deficit on the one and only condition that it should provide an acceptable service to the Canadian people, because that is the primary purpose of the Post Office and let us not forget it.

Mr. Speaker, who could name one agency in the field of public education able to do its own financing or even to break even?

I maintain that the rates proposed by the Post Office Department are prohibitive and it won't take me long to prove it. I would like to refer as an example to the newspaper, *l'Union des Cantons de l'Est* which at present pays \$12.98 as shipping expenses for 865 pounds of mail. As a result of an increase of 3½ cents per pound proposed under the new legislation, the same shipment will cost \$48.29. Is that normal, Mr. Speaker?

In the case of newspapers freely distributed, I would like to refer to the *Courrier Sud* which for an average copy of 32 pages is now paying about \$280 for 800 copies. Under the proposed raise of 7 cents per copy, in the same conditions, the cost will be \$560.