

*Post Office Act*

refrigeration or heat, all of which would add considerably to the cost and increase the cost of the merchandise to the public.

At the present time firms such as this pick up their mail at the post office either from a very large lock box, or as in the case of this particular firm, through a sack arrangement whereby they can pick it up at the counter.

**Mr. Kierans:** The service will still be available.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, the minister received an injunction from my colleague this afternoon and I do not think I need repeat it. If the minister has paid attention to this point, then it is all to the good; but if that service were curtailed or completely eliminated there would be considerable cost and inconvenience. I think it can be said from his gestures that the minister has perhaps modified his stand in this regard. I shall wait for his further answer.

I now wish to deal with the question of the religious press. We are told that under the provisions of this bill a weekly newspaper published in a town of less than 10,000 people will have the first 2,500 copies of its publication handled free of charge if delivered within a radius of 40 miles. Most of the religious publications do not fall in this category. They are not the profit makers. They do not get government advertising in any volume. They do not get lush supermarket advertising. Most of them exist on a hand-to-mouth basis. Yet in the case of one of these publications in western Canada it will have an additional postal charge of \$7,000, just about enough to cause it to close its doors unless there is a substantial increase in its subscription rate.

• (9:10 p.m.)

In this regard we run into some other complications. Canadian magazines as a whole will be penalized vis-à-vis United States and foreign publications. For one thing, in order to meet the increased postal costs Canadian magazines will have to increase their subscription rates. United States magazines will not have to do this because there is nothing in the bill which says there will be any greater charge imposed on United States magazines. The postage on United States magazines is paid in the United States, and therefore the Canadian government does not benefit from this. So therefore it is completely irrelevant. What we are concerned with are Canadian magazines and Canadian newspapers. I shall not talk about those pseudo-Canadian magazines, *Reader's Digest* and *Time* magazine.

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

Just another bonus is being given to them as against truly Canadian publications.

The government of Canada has always held to the principle of subsidizing in some way the press in general because of its importance to the Canadian national life. The minister now says we will get rid of that principle, that the principle no longer applies. Surely to goodness it ought to be enough, that Canadian publications are already under the heaviest possible economic competition from the United States. They do not have the built-in advantage of *Time* and *Reader's Digest*, which were legitimized in some fashion by the action of the administration of which the minister is a member.

Secondly I think—and some people have mentioned this today—that since the Canadian public is being asked to subsidize another communication media for the dissemination of ideas, to wit the C.B.C., we should be able to subsidize in some way Canadian newspapers and periodicals which also disseminate Canadian ideas. With regard to the church press, I believe perhaps it would be a desirable objective to assist the dissemination of views which are a counterpoint to some of the irreligious drivel one sees from time to time on the C.B.C. If we are prepared to subsidize some of the programming on the C.B.C., surely there is a real case for subsidizing the counterargument in the church press. The minister has received a very extensive brief from the representatives of the church press. I think this was worth while reading, but I need not repeat it at this time.

I am not sure that this bill meets the problems of the Post Office Department. It is stated that the department will have a deficit, but no factual proof has been put forward, outside of some tables. Nothing has been said about why it costs so much to handle one piece of first class mail, newspaper, or whatever it might be. Nothing has been said, other than the mere statement that it costs a certain amount. Nothing has been said about improving the efficiency of the department. Nothing has been said about meeting the wage increases and so forth with increased productivity. Many questions have been raised by this bill which remain unanswered.

It is for this reason that I entirely support the contention put forward by my colleague, the hon. member for Hillsborough, that this bill must go to a committee for a detailed answer and for the minister to prove his case. It is not up to this house to prove that the minister is wrong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.