

*Non-Canadian Publications*

● (1530)

One must not think only of the big publications—*Maclean's*, *Saturday Night* and *Chatelaine*. These magazines are undoubtedly important—as a matter of fact the restoration of *Saturday Night* is a positive step forward. But *Saturday Night* was restored at a time when this legislation was still on the order paper. Indeed the publisher and the editor have indicated that Bill C-58 is not really of such significance to them—that the survival of their paper is not really at stake in the debate on the passage of Bill C-58. In any case, I do not believe that the plan to establish a truly Canadian news magazine, which they say they want to produce, really depends on the passage of Bill C-58.

When I talk about a positive policy I should like to remind the minister that I do not speak as a Johnny-come-lately on this subject. I am not a neophyte in the publishing world. When I call for a positive policy as an alternative to the present terms of Bill C-58 what I am really doing is coming back to the government, in a different role as a member of parliament, to say the very things I came to Ottawa to say in 1968 when I was a member of the executive of the Canadian Church Press.

The Canadian Church Press is an association in Canada which embraces about 25 publications with a total circulation of well over one million. It is only one of many trade associations representing various publishing categories. Others are educational, scientific, or agricultural.

When we came to Ottawa in 1968 we came with a sense of alarm because at that time the postmaster general, Mr. Eric Kierans, was bringing before the House a bill to raise the postal rates. Mr. Kierans took the view that the Post Office should pay for itself and that second class mailing privileges, which publications such as those I have described had enjoyed, should be restricted in such a way as to decrease the Post Office deficit.

We came with a brief and we presented it to the postmaster general. I do not hold the minister responsible today for the actions of Mr. Kierans when he was postmaster general, but I want to assure him that when I talk about postal rates for Canadian publications these are much more instrumental to the survival and encouragement of Canadian publications than is this bill concerning *Time* and *Reader's Digest*. Thus, when I come to spell out the basis of a positive policy I want to assure the minister, with as much modesty as I can muster, that I know what I am talking about.

I was, during this period, the editor and manager of a religious publication which sought to fill a community and social need in western Canada. This publication received many international awards. I am not going to say it is in the class or category of *Reader's Digest*, but it was doing its bit to make this country stronger. When we came here in 1968 we ran up against a stone wall of cabinet thinking as exemplified by Mr. Kierans.

I want to read a couple of paragraphs from our submission because they are relevant today—even more so, because what we predicted in 1968 came to pass as a result of the unprecedented actions of the Liberal government of that day and the absence of a policy on publishing which

[Mr. Roche.]

recognized the effect of postal rates on publications. We said at that time:

The Government of Canada has long recognized the role of the church press of Canada as an important educational medium, operating for the common good. Religious publications have enjoyed a preferential postal rate, ¼ cent per pound below that of general magazines, along with publications devoted to the sciences or agriculture.

The church press represents a cause and not an economic investment. All of our publications operate either on the narrowest of margins financially, or at a deficit made up by the sponsoring church or religious organization. Most of the advertising appearing in our journals is from church-related organizations, although some of the magazines compete as vigorously as limited budgets permit for general advertising.

As you may be aware, church publications do not enjoy news stand sales in Canada. Some of our member publications have investigated the possibility of putting their magazines on the news stands without success. Our publications are almost completely dependent, therefore, on the mail for distribution.

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There is grave concern, therefore, for the survival of some publications if increases in rates for second class mail are such that they put too heavy a strain on the publications' financial resources.

I have recounted that in order to indicate that at that time the government was not interested in merely retaining special rates for consumer publications to enable them to survive. If the government had done so at that time, that itself would have been a big step for Canadian publications which in 1968 were beginning to feel the ravages of inflation.

I remember very well putting forth our arguments to Mr. Kierans, who could see only the corporate approach to the Post Office—that of its paying its way. Immediately after that a bill went through the House of Commons and the government took away the preferential rate for specialized publications to which I have referred, and increased the rate for magazines of between one and a half cents and three cents a pound. The basic harm that was done was that the bill, which was then known as Bill C-116, raised the price per pound from three cents to five cents and, worst of all, instituted a minimum floor rate of two cents per piece.

That action alone put in jeopardy many specialized publications that were trying to make a contribution to Canada's life, and ended the lives of several. I recall that not so much from the negative point of view but to remind the minister that I remember only too well what happened. I ask him whether he now thinks that bringing in a bill to take away a tax concession granted to *Time* and *Reader's Digest* is the answer.

I suggest to the minister it is not, because the magazines and publications that I have been referring to do not depend on big consumer advertising for their survival. Indeed, if you pick up the major Canadian consumer magazines today they seem to do pretty well with Canadian advertising. But what these magazines are contending, along with the smaller publications, is that the postal rates are killing them, and so are postal service and late delivery.

Therefore, hand in hand with a positive policy toward Canadian publications would have to go some improvement in service for Canadian publications on the part of the Post Office, with the recognition that Canadian publi-