

Postal Service Policies

Surely the Postmaster General can indicate whether he considers this a socially acceptable measure that meets the criterion of giving service to the people. An article appeared in the *Free Press Weekly* of January 4, 1969, with regard to publications in Canada. It reads in part:

• (4:10 p.m.)

And again (*Hansard*, page 2004): "With regard to the *Free Press Weekly*, 22,676,000 copies were carried last year. The cost of carrying the *Free Press Weekly* last year was \$1,622,000."

The financial statement of the Post Office, dated October 1968, reports that 18,304,111 copies of *Time* magazine were handled at a cost of \$1,094,147.

From these figures, the Post Office cost of handling a single copy of *Time* was 5.97 cents; and for the *Free Press Weekly*, 7.15 cents.

This is a clear indication that if the Postmaster General and the cabinet are concerned about Canadian weeklies and dailies they should give consideration to this particular publication *Time*, which seems to me to be costing many Canadian dollars.

I now turn to some of the closures of post offices in Canada. I am not going to refer to particular cases but rather will speak about the general situation. The Postmaster General has stated that the criteria for closing many of these post offices include service of less than 30 families and revenue below \$1,000. The minister indicated to the Transport Committee that a thorough investigation would be carried on before any further closures would be made. This appears from the committee proceedings on March 10 and March 12. I ask hon. members of this House whether since March 12 any post offices have been closed in their constituencies. Some have been closed in mine, and I think other hon. members will find a similar situation in their constituencies.

The main question that this House has to be concerned with is whether the minister and the government are interested in effective communication, in whether the user, the general public, has had the opportunity to make representations to the postal authorities before such closures are made. I am beginning to wonder from looking at the various reasons given for post office closures in various parts of the country whether the government is concerned at all about community life. I have my doubts in this respect.

If all that the government is worried about is the balance sheet, and this is the only criterion used in deciding whether to close post offices, then community life in eastern and western Canada as we have known it will

come to an end. People in those areas will suffer and so will the community and the nation at large. There is no way you can close down post offices in these areas and expect community life to continue as the residents there have known it in their lifetimes. This community life should continue to exist for many years, even though we accept the fact that change is in the air, that the name of the game is change at the present time.

If the government is determined to eliminate rural life in Canada, it is important they should say so now so that the people in those areas will know where the government stands on this issue. The report of the task force recently delivered to us suggests that the small farmer will probably disappear, having been absorbed by corporate enterprise. The small community is disappearing too, with the backing of this government. What else could result from taking away services from the people? The small community will disappear through no fault of its own and with the assistance of the federal government. It appears to me that this government is hell-bent upon the elimination of rural life in Canada, and as quickly as possible.

I should like to make reference to the definition of "moral community" which appears in the Dictionary of Sociology and Related Sciences. The minister is not in the chamber at the moment but I hope that one of the members of his staff will bring it to his attention. "Moral community" is defined as—

The sharing of ultimate values among a number of persons so as to produce in them a sense of common orientation and striving. Moral community may be present in as small a group as a family and as large a group as a nation.

If we refuse to recognize the concept of a moral community in this nation, we will devalue not only our principles but our morals. We will no longer be a nation but will consist of a complex of large metropolitan areas of the sort to be found in central Canada. It appears to me that if we are worried about Canada generally we must realize that moral community embraces more than the elimination of unprofitable post offices that the Postmaster General appears to believe must be done away with.

The Postmaster General said that the principal factor in this situation is change. We all know the name of the game is change, but not all change is good. Yet the government are insistent upon making changes even though some of the changes are not good. Indeed, they are so determined to make

[Mr. Skoberg.]