

*Postal Service*

either the public of Canada or citizens of the United States. So long as speculation is legitimate, people who speculate, and particularly the smaller investor, should be protected as far as possible from victimization. If our federal and provincial laws are not sufficiently strong to deal with people who have the intent to defraud, and against whom a legitimate case can be made, then I agree with the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) that the laws of Canada should be strengthened. It is perfectly true, as was said by the hon. member who has just taken his seat, that under provincial and federal administrations there are a good many ways in which an individual can be penalized. It seems to me that in recent years, particularly since a number of licences and so on of different kinds have been granted, we have given to our officials a good deal of leeway in dealing with individuals.

The point was made a few moments ago that in the province of Ontario, for instance, the driver of an automobile may have his operator's licence taken away under certain circumstances without recourse to the courts. Of course Ontario is not alone in this respect, by any means; I believe the same thing can be done in all the provinces, because legislation in regard to these matters is more or less similar throughout Canada.

It seems to me that over long periods of years we have built up the right of the individual under the law to a hearing when accused, to be adjudged innocent or guilty, and to suffer the imposition of a penalty if guilt is shown. I know, because I have been long enough in this house to remember, that some people in the United States, including the government of that country, are anxious that mails from Canada to that country shall not be used to invite investment in companies or projects more or less fraudulent in their nature. I was on the external affairs committee, for example, when we had before us an extradition treaty. I remember the long inquiry into that matter, and the forceful reasons given at that time as to why a treaty of that kind should be entered into between our two countries. At that time there were people in Canada who were using the mails in order to defraud citizens of our neighbouring country. None the less I think the committee at that time was loath indeed to do anything that might unduly restrict the right of a Canadian citizen to be protected under our own laws.

In the matter that has been brought to the attention of the house this afternoon I believe the minister would be well advised not only to give consideration to some amendments that might strengthen the law, but to

[Mr. Coldwell.]

introduce amendments in the house this session in order that the law might be strengthened and the sort of criticism that has been levelled recently against the Post Office Department might not have any validity in future. I am perfectly sure that members of the house would welcome such legislation if it is necessary and desirable, but I do think we must beware lest we grant to officials of government a power over the citizens of this country which they should not possess.

The point I am trying to make is that if we are going to deal with matters of this kind, there should be a satisfactory law under which the authorities can act. As the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) said a few moments ago, a statute with fairly severe penalties for contravention of the law would be a better deterrent than merely picking up the mail or forbidding the use of the mail to an individual. The minister shakes his head; I may be wrong. Let me point out to him, however, that in denying the use of the mails there is a possibility that innocent people may have their legitimate rights restricted and be punished without any real cause.

I do not know these people whose activities are under discussion at the present time, nor am I particularly anxious to learn who they are, because here again we may find that among them are people innocent of any wrong-doing, and I would not want any name brought into the house which would be unjust to any individual who had no wrongful intent. But even some of the employees of these organizations have found it very difficult to obtain mail that perhaps they should have been able to obtain, and which may have had very little if any connection with the operations of the companies concerned. I understand that an attempt has been made to protect innocent employees, and I am glad to learn that. I do not believe the Postmaster General (Mr. Rinfret) or the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) would do knowingly anything unjust to an individual. Nor do I think the deputy postmaster general would do anything of the kind. I happen to know that gentleman, who was connected with this parliament for a long time in another capacity. But being human we are all liable to make mistakes.

I suppose the minister will have something to say on this matter before we leave it, and in all probability will reply to some of the statements and suggestions that have been made by the leader of the opposition. At the moment I must confess I do feel some apprehension lest without a statute, without a charge laid against an individual, we may do some innocent persons an injustice. I am interested in punishing anyone who may