

Post Office Act

Considering that he admitted there was a deficit of some \$100 million—I heard indeed the hon. member say there was such a deficit—does the hon. member deem it fairer to have that deficit paid by all Canadian taxpayers rather than by newspaper owners, subscribers and buyers, and those who are using the postal services?

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Speaker, the answer would be very easy, I think, and a lot fairer, if the government reduced its expenditures and stopped thinking in a scatter-brained way as it has done since 1963, in short if it had planned its expenditures in order to get more properly balanced budgets in the departments.

[English]

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to take very much of the time of the house, but one thing that concerns me as much as anything else in this proposed legislation is the position of the weekly newspapers. Perhaps I should more closely define them as the weekly farm newspapers. There are two in particular which serve the farming population in western Canada, the *Western Producer* published in Saskatoon and the *Free Press Weekly*, I think it is called now, published in Winnipeg. From the information I have had it looks to me that the increased cost in each case is, to say the least, substantial. There is at present an amendment before the house to refer this bill to a standing committee, and the situation of the weekly newspapers and others such as the *North Battleford News-Optimist* is probably the best reason for doing so.

I do not propose to take the position that there should be no increase in postal rates on these particular publications. As someone else has said this afternoon, I do not suppose that as an individual member I have that much knowledge of the situation. When one reads in an article in the *Globe and Mail* of October 11, quoting Richard S. Malone, publisher of the *Free Press Weekly*, it is alleged to be Canada's only remaining weekly although I do not think that is so—as saying that that paper will be faced with additional costs of about \$400,000 a year, one gets some understanding of the problem. According to the news story, Mr. Malone said that if the increase goes into effect it will represent an increase of 230 per cent in postal rates for the weekly, which has a circulation of 600,000. The *Free Press Weekly*, of course, has recently

absorbed the 400,000 circulation *Family Herald*. The article goes on to say:

"The projected postal increases will have the most serious impact on weekly publications and farm papers," he added. "When the *Family Herald* folded recently, largely because of rising costs, it was paying \$100,000 a year in postal charges."

My information is that the *Western Producer* reports about the same rate of increase. The *Family Herald* has, of course, recently folded and it was, I suppose, one of the oldest farm weeklies in Canada. There may be older ones in the province of Quebec or in the maritimes. The information I have been given by people who publish these weeklies is largely substantiated by the article in the *Globe and Mail*. Anyone who farms in western Canada knows that the *Western Producer*, the other major western farm weekly, has been operating at a substantial deficit year after year. I have talked to some of the people responsible and they tell me that it is very unlikely they could increase their advertising rates. The *Western Producer* depends mostly on national advertising for what one might call its large page advertising. It also has, of course, a great deal of classified advertising.

What concerns me is whether newspapers of this type are going to be able to absorb this increase or are they going to have to cease publication. I don't know. I suppose no one will know for sure until these publishers are presented with the bill and decide either to pay it or just quit. I would think there will certainly be some soul searching by the people responsible for paying the deficit incurred by the *Western Producer*. These papers serve a purpose which will not be served if they are not there. They carry farm news which otherwise would not be carried.

In the last issue of the *Western Producer*, for example, we have the news that farm scientists are to visit Japan. There is a story on the shortage of experts in the poor nations. This, one could say, is practically standard news. But there is also a report in this newspaper that Alberta is phasing out its sire purchase policy. This is the type of report you would not find in the large daily newspapers or over radio or television. In addition, there is an article advising farmers to check their bins regularly when they are harvesting out of condition grain. Obviously such a report emanates from a university or a department of agriculture.