

this American newspaper literature which had better be curtailed. The Minister says that this is state aid for denominational papers, but we say, give that aid to all newspapers which had done so much in the past to increase the circulation of Canadian literature. Unless the Minister succeeds in making the newspapers pay their way this law should not be passed, but he himself has admitted that the rate to be charged will not pay one-fortieth of the expense which the transmission of newspapers through the mails entails.

Again, Sir, there is a very strong objection to this dead letter clause. I am opposed to giving to the Postmaster General—in speaking of the Postmaster General I do not refer to the present incumbent of the office; he will not always be Postmaster General—I am opposed to giving any Postmaster General the power asked for in this clause. The Postmaster General at his own sweet will can issue an order that any post office can be made a dead letter office. Suppose an election is coming on he could put machinery in motion under this clause, which would enure to his political advantage and to euchreing his opponents. The secrecy of letters transmitted through the mails should be jealously guarded. I say that this change should not be made because there is no necessity whatever for it. If it is done at all it should be done by Order in Council and not by the will of any Minister. Under this present Government we are met with too much power being exercised by the heads of the departments, and it would conduce to good government if most of these executive acts were done by Order in Council. What is the delay at Ottawa under the present dead letter system to which the Postmaster General refers to? He has a very large staff here and there should be no delay. The dead letter office should be conducted in the same manner as our savings banks and other institutions, and the dead letters that come in one day should all be dealt with that same day before the officials leave the office. I would ask the Minister what is the greatest delay in the case of dead letters coming into the office? Suppose a dead letter comes into headquarters to-day, when is that letter disposed of?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I am not able to go into these details, but I say that the present system provokes delay from the very nature of the case. Suppose a letter is received at Ottawa which is not addressed at all.

Mr. WALLACE. That is very unusual.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. On the contrary it is quite usual. Or suppose it is indistinctly addressed. Then the letter is opened and correspondence takes place and a notice may have to be sent a thousand or three thousand miles away. If the person written to does not reply within a

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reasonable time a communication is sent to the writer if he can be discovered, and great delay occurs before the letter can be treated. I am not saying that the officials are dilatory in taking the initial steps, but on account of the distance in many cases the delay occurs. I may say that the system I suggest in this Bill was adopted eight years ago with regard to Victoria, B.C., and has been in force there since, without there being any legal authority for it whatever.

Mr. WALLACE. I can quite understand that in the case of Victoria and perhaps another point, the system proposed might be found useful. The Minister must remember that five-sixths of the population of Canada is within thirty-six hours reach of Ottawa, and, therefore, any long delay can only occur in a very small percentage of the correspondence.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. My hon. friend has conceded the principle as regards Victoria, and it has been already adopted there *ex necessitate rei*. If my hon. friend is desirous of being reasonable with me in this matter—

Mr. WALLACE. I always was.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I hope so. Are there not other points to which he will concede the principle? It was only contemplated to have this in force in cities, and for that matter I am not desirous of having it even in small cities.

Mr. WALLACE. In the case of Victoria, and one other place, I do not think there would be much objection to this clause.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Would my hon. friend object to it in regard to other mail matter than letters?

Mr. WALLACE. I do not think so.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Would he allow it in regard to letters coming from abroad?

Mr. WALLACE. I think all letters should be treated the same way.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Then I will meet the hon. gentleman's wishes as far as I can. Supposing that a part of the clause is admitted—as regards other than letters, newspapers, parcels and post cards?

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. Hear, hear.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Then allow it with regard to letters not originating in Canada, and I will go further and put the points in the Bill.

Mr. FOSTER. That would be far preferable.

Mr. WALLACE. I cannot just see why the hon. Minister makes a distinction be-