

POST OFFICE ACT

ENLARGEMENT OF PROVISION RESPECTING DISTRIBUTION OF NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Hon. Alcide Cote (Postmaster General) moved the second reading of Bill No. 473, to amend the Post Office Act.

Mrs. Fairclough: Does the minister propose to make an explanation of the change?

Mr. T. A. M. Kirk (Parliamentary Assistant to the Postmaster General): Mr. Speaker, I shall make a brief explanation. This bill is being introduced as a result of representations received by the government from the Periodical Press Association on behalf of Canadian publishers, to the effect that the proposed amendment will be of benefit to them.

At the present time, Canadian publishers, in order to enjoy the reduced statutory rates on copies of their publications going to subscribers, must post such copies at the post office in the place in which the office of publication is situated.

The publishers' representations are to the effect that if more than one point of mailing was permitted they could forward their publications in certain instances by bus, by truck or by air cargo to other centres for local mailing and thus afford a faster delivery to their subscribers in different parts of the country. This would be an advantage to them in their competition with United States publications.

Apart from being an advantage to publishers, the proposed amendment could conceivably result in some saving to the Post Office Department, as we would not have to pay certain transportation charges in any instance where a publisher took advantage of this suggested procedure. In so far as the Post Office Department is concerned, we recommend the adoption of the legislation.

Mrs. Ellen L. Fairclough (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as there are questions we will wish to ask at the committee stage, I do not propose at this time to discuss the matter at length. However, there are certain questions which, because of the nature of the bill, particularly its brevity and its apparent innocence—a feature which, may I say, we always suspect—we will want to ask. We will want to know precisely what the effect of the bill will be.

First of all, we will want to know just how many centres the Postmaster General (Mr. Cote) might designate as areas to which bulk shipments might be made, in respect of any one national publication. Is this going to be a matter of several centres within a province, or the main terminal points in the

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provinces across Canada? We would also like to know whether or not this change in the regulation will have any effect on the content of any periodical. Will it alter in any way the rules which now exist with regard to the advertising these publications are permitted to accept?

When I ask this, I have in mind the fact of course that certain publications will be in a preferred position, by reason of their being able to get their publications into the field at distant points days quicker than otherwise they would be able to do. That is an advantage in competing for advertising in the general advertising field as against the United States publications which now enjoy that privilege.

There is also the general question of revenue. In what way will the revenue of the Post Office Department be affected by this change? Another general point into which we shall want to inquire rather closely is just what is the difference in this matter of the shipment of publications between daily newspapers and periodicals. The minister will recall that when we were speaking on the first item of his estimates I addressed a question to him with regard to the shipment of newspapers to distant points by T.C.A. in passenger seats. If I remember correctly the minister at that time told me that that was a matter strictly between the newspaper itself and T.C.A. I notice that this bill does say both newspapers and periodicals. If regulations exist which prohibit the bulk shipment of newspapers and periodicals to distant points, there to be broken down and mailed, then I should like to know under what regulation the newspapers are permitted to bulk ship, and if that permission is granted to them—possibly this is a question which would more properly be directed to the department which handles T.C.A., but nevertheless the minister, having some connection with it, must also know the answer—under what terms is T.C.A. permitted to occupy passenger seats with these newspapers, certainly to the inconvenience of the travelling public and possibly also to the detriment of their actual safety. I realize, Mr. Speaker, that in bringing up that point I am probably on the borderline. The Postmaster General has very definite responsibility in this regard because of the connection which his department has with the dissemination of this material from coast to coast. With these few remarks, Mr. Speaker, we shall rest until the bill gets to the committee stage, when we shall press for answers to these and other questions.