

*Post Office Act*

Representatives of the War Amputees Association of Canada told us this morning that if the minister proceeds with the proposed rates, they would suffer from the measure, since their costs would increase by 66 $\frac{2}{3}$  per cent. They would have to put an end to their publication, their activities, and their association would disappear. If other newspapers follow suit—and that will happen as mentioned by hon. members—it will mean that unemployment will increase. It is not the situation of a newspaper that is concerned, but that of people who use the postal service—

**An hon. Member:** It is not a newspaper.

**Mr. Asselin:**—and who benefit from the rate of third class mail.

The minister's measure also affects Christmas stamps. I refer to the stamps of antituberculosis associations.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have proved quite clearly to the minister, during this debate, that it would be useless for us to read again the telegrams we have here. I am not here to take the defence—as the hon. member for Trois-Rivières put it—of the weeklies and dailies. I am here, first of all, to represent the people who elected me. And I say that the people who elected me are saturated with the municipal, school, provincial, or federal taxes they have to pay, and I think the member for Trois-Rivières will agree on that point.

We wondered a while ago where to find the money. There must be other ways to find some. The minister must have enough imagination; his officials must have a sufficient knowledge of the workings of his department to look thoroughly into the post office area in order to decide where to get the money while cutting down some services and nevertheless maintaining the quality of some services.

In his speech, the minister said he would close down the small post offices that do not show any profits.

If he thinks he is going to make millions by closing down small rural post offices which mean so much to the people, I am of the opinion that postal rates should not be used as a means to balance the Post Office Department budget. Had the minister only been consistent, had his officials only accepted to advise him so that he could have better enlightened the members, he would have told us: We explored every possibility, we created a committee of experts—this he mentioned in his speech—and here is the report of that committee. Then, we could have seen that the

[Mr. Asselin.]

problems had been dealt with in depth. Then, the minister would not have had to improvise as he did today by introducing a bill to over-tax the taxpayers.

• (4:50 p.m.)

In closing, I say this Mr. Speaker: the newspaper owners will not be the ones to suffer most from those measures. Once again, it will be the consumer, the taxpayer. I therefore ask the minister, and the government; to tell us when you will put an end to taxes, when our people can look to the future with a faint glimmer of hope. We shall know tonight, the present government will again crush the taxpayers with new taxes.

It was said last May that the country enjoyed an excellent financial position. And tonight, no measure will be proposed to balance next year's budget. I am convinced that we shall again end up with a deficit of about \$500 million.

In spite of this, of course, the government, for several years, has been spending foolishly in every field. I would like to give an example to the member of Trois-Rivières. If, instead of buying new uniforms for the members of the armed forces, that money had been assigned to the post office administration, we would probably not be facing a rate increase today.

How many other examples we could quote to show the careless spending of the government since 1963, whereas we, on this side of the house, have asked several times that they legislate according to a stricter order of priorities. In 1968, a responsible government should legislate on a priority basis.

Such are the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, we cannot approve the increase suggested by the Postmaster General. That is also why we urge the minister to be sensible, to accept the suggestion made by our party and to refer this bill to the committee, so that together we may give it thorough consideration and explore every possible avenue leading to some way of balancing the budget of the Postmaster General.

**Mr. Mongrain:** Would the hon. member allow me a question?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Will the hon. member for Charlevoix allow the hon. member for Trois-Rivières a question?

**Mr. Asselin:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mongrain:** Would the hon. member answer the following question?