

Post Office Act

What about the Glasgow report? Those enquiry commissions have costed millions of dollars and with what results, I am asking the minister? With the results that their reports have been shelved. Years have passed, governments have passed and the said reports still are there accumulating dust.

When the government becomes conscious of a gathering storm, when it feels that the atmosphere is unsettled, that people are dissatisfied then some representative of the government stands up and with a big smile, like the hon. Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, (Mr. Pepin) he tells us that a royal enquiry commission will be established. Then they appoint judges, or people like Mr. Jean-Louis Gagnon, an ex-communist, and they conduct an inquiry to quiet the storm. Once people are satisfied, they say: Ottawa is moving. The government is happy. An enquiry has been made. Some people climb on the gravy train, at the expenses of the taxpayer thanks to incredibly high salaries. Those inquiries cost \$20,000 or \$25,000 a year. I am told that it even costs \$100 a day to delve into a matter, to solve a problem, to study it, to read briefs, receive them, hear the witnesses and, once the inquiry is closed, hundreds of thousands of dollars are paid out again. The printers are paid to publish the reports. We saw what happened to the B & B report for instance, and the Glassco report, the Carter report, the Porter report. They were consigned to oblivion. When the storm is over and peace has been restored, there is a rush to put away on dusty shelves a report which deals with a specific situation. Meanwhile, restrictive, negative measures are introduced which give nothing to the Canadian people, which on the contrary deprive them of the daily bread to which they are entitled, which is known as information, and which is a fundamental right in a democratic society.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that the situation is extremely serious at this point, and if the minister maintains his absurd and untenable position, tomorrow we will witness an information crisis, a crisis involving the right to free speech, to freedom of the press. Who knows whether tomorrow perhaps the freedom of the press may not be attacked by the same majority government? Who knows? Perhaps the right to vote may be attacked by the majority government since that same government is buying votes. Who knows? Maybe this very government will attack the freedom of the press or the freedom of expression.

Mr. Speaker, I think the situation is extremely serious. It should not be considered as a sentimental issue but rather as a matter of reasoning. As to whether or not it is more important that the Post Office Department should pile up deficits or that the right to information should prevail and should be fed, I then say that priority is self-evident and that we must keep on feeding public information rather than cut it to the heart as the minister is doing, arguing that the question of money must come first so that he may tell the opposition next year: Would you please, I beg you, vote more credits for me because my plans did not materialize and I come back with empty hands and facing another deficit.

As far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, I tell the minister he has no conscience if he comes back one year from now—it is obvious that the bill will go through since this government is authoritarian—and if he asks us to vote credits for him, because his department shows the usual yearly deficit. I will tell him then that he is unscrupulous and that he has made a complete about-face.

I should like the minister to consider that. All members, even the government members, would be glad to sit on a special committee to examine more thoroughly the situation in the Post Office Department so as to update that department and render it more profit-earning, in order to serve more adequately the Canadian people, since after all it is always the Canadian people, the Canadian citizen, the little man who has to pay for the damage done by a high-handed majority government.

[*English*]

Mr. Charles H. Thomas (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this amendment, Mr. Speaker, because I feel very strongly about the impact of this bill on the Canadian people. The proposals contained in Bill No. C-116 will have a direct bearing on all Canadians, rich or poor, and will hit their pocketbooks. In common with other legislation so far produced in this just society, this bill will hit the low income Canadian the hardest. At the outset, I should like to concur in the remarks of my colleague the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) made in this house on Monday. I, too, question the accounting procedures of the Post Office Department, and wonder if the financial picture is as bleak as it is being painted.

Several questions come to my mind. Is the Post Office Department being assessed for charges which should be assumed by other