

## Post Office Act

Some Quebec newspapers deliver over half their papers by mail.

In addition, in the case of some dailies, mailing costs would be tripled or even quadrupled; this would necessarily lead to an unjustifiable and unreasonable increase in subscription rates (which barely cover the cost of paper and mailing in most cases) and, as will readily be understood, a radical falling off in circulation with ensuing loss in advertising income, the cost of which is directly related to the circulation.

The following table shows better than any argument the increase in newspapers mailing rates and their extravagant and excessive character.

Mr. Speaker, here we are given a table of the mailing rates, which the minister also received:

Sherbrooke's *Tribune* which has 6,978 subscribers and whose subscription rate is \$4.60 at present, would be \$13.70 at the new rates.

As far as *Montréal-Matin* is concerned, the cost would jump from \$6 to \$9.

In the case of *Le Soleil*, the subscription rate would be increased from \$7.30 to \$24.75. There would be less difference in price for *Montréal-Matin*, because the distribution is made in greater Montreal area. But if we consider the position of *Le Soleil*, which serves its subscribers across the province of Quebec, you have an idea of the variation of rates, since the subscription rate at present is \$7.30, and it would climb up to \$24.75. I need not give the names of all newspapers, the minister has certainly considered many times the position of all of them before going to sleep.

I continue to read the brief, Mr. Speaker but I shall not take very long:

● (8:30 p.m.)

As those figures indicate, the annual cost for the above mentioned newspapers... would increase from \$615,507 to \$1,812,552—

The most surprising aspect of the proposed reforms, is the disproportion between the mailing rates of this class of mail in Canada and those in effect in the United States. In fact, in the United States, since January 1968, the rates on advertising portion are as follows:

(Destination within 150 miles)  
1968—\$0.046 per pound  
1969—\$0.049 per pound  
1970—\$0.053 per pound

(Destination within 500 miles)  
1968—\$0.057 per pound  
1969—\$0.06 per pound  
1970—\$0.064 per pound

The mailing rates for the reading portion (no limited area) are the following:

1968—\$0.03 per pound  
1969—\$0.032 per pound  
1970—\$0.034 per pound

These are called reasonable and normal increases. I wonder, when we copy the

United States so often, why our high-ranking officials have not, once more, tried to imitate our neighbours, at least in order to keep rates within the limits of reason.

Should the forwarding charges on second class mail be the same for all publications in the category? Should no distinction be made between the role or nature of publications and their usefulness to society? Do we not burden some class of publications with costs out of proportion with those supported by the department in connection with their handling?

The particular situation of the Quebec dailies (proportionally few, with a large circulation) the above-mentioned chart, the comparison with the rates in the United States mentioned above, and the questions raised here, as well as in the various editorials published, and in the house, are quite enough to show the need for a more detailed study of the conditions of the increase which might have become necessary.

We are ready to participate in it and to provide you with any information you may require.

The writer of this editorial is not asking for anything impossible; he is merely making a reasonable and a sensible request.

Before their taxes are increased threefold, they should at least be allowed to put their case before a government committee, to appear before this government, which is supposed to be the government of the people.

As to the discontinuance of mail delivery on Saturdays, I wish to say that in our areas most weekly papers are delivered on Saturday. We will therefore have to read Friday papers on Monday. The news will by then be pretty stale, and I think that subscriptions to our weekly papers would fall off greatly. This problem is mentioned in the brief. That is the main argument put forward by the representatives of the weekly papers, and I think the committee should give consideration to this question if it wants these weekly papers to survive and their subscribers to be able to pay a fair subscription rate instead of three times that price in order to get news that are four day late.

Mr. Speaker, we find the following passage on page 6 of the brief:

In a democratic system, the citizen has a right to be informed.

That is exactly what I have been saying in my remarks.

The role of the press—especially of the written press—is to collect and to circulate information.

However, the measures which your Department is contemplating now, in order to settle an administrative problem, will result in hindering the right of the citizen to be informed and the freedom of the press to circulate that information.

Therefore, we suggest that these reforms be delayed in order to allow a more detailed study