

Post Office Act

Mr. Fortin: Some government members are now trying to interrupt me; it would be so easy for them to rise and speak. They have the right to do so because we live in a democratic country. Let them rise and say what they think of the Postmaster General, what they think of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I received in my office a telegram from *Le Soleil* and three times, telegrams from the *Quebec Chronicle Telegraph*. I also received telegrams from *L'Union des Cantons de l'Est*, from *La Tribune*, from *Le Nouvelliste* of Trois-Rivières and as the leader of the Ralliement Créditiste said, from nearly all Quebec newspapers. All members are aware of that situation. We do not want the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the government to think that we will accept that without any protest.

Mr. Speaker, we must wake up. It is about time that we assume our responsibilities in that field as in others. The minister said today, and I will conclude my remarks with that: I urge you, hon. members of the opposition, to pass my bill to reduce the cost of public information, so that the Post Office Department can balance its budget and make some profits like private enterprise. I implore you, help me to save my department from failure. And in a year, to the day, the same minister—if he is still in Ottawa, and I doubt, because his popularity is rapidly declining—will say to us: I beg of you, vote my estimates to make up for my deficit. That is what we have seen last night.

A few months ago, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, now Secretary of State for External Affairs, (Mr. Sharp) told us: I beg the hon. members of the opposition to give me the authority to borrow money to make up for my deficit, and I guarantee that with an increase of 5 per cent in taxation, we will not have any deficit.

Last night, a speech of more than 11,000 words was needed to repeat this rubbish that we have known for a hundred years: I beg of you, vote my estimates, we have a deficit of \$760 millions.

Mr. Speaker, I have taught school at the primary and secondary levels. I even taught children in an occupational centre, that is mentally retarded children. I would not go so far as to say that the house is made up of mentally retarded people, let me be clear on that; but I say that the house reacts in the same way before such tremendous deficits, and the government seems to think that we of the opposition, are completely irresponsible.

[Mr. Fortin.]

At this stage of the debate, I want to tell the government that it must reconsider its decision without any political sentimentalizing, because the Post Office bill would stab the weeklies in the back. I therefore ask him to review his decision, bearing in mind the well informed speeches of the members of the opposition and the incalculable representations made every hour and every day of the week. I ask him to pay particular attention to the thousands of letters we receive. I ask him to acknowledge a principle has never been disputed, that of an objective information in a democratic land.

Consequently, we would like, as would the whole population, not only from Lotbinière or the eastern townships in Quebec, but from all Canadian provinces, to see the minister, for one or two more months, refer the matter to a committee, to which members of the government party, Progressive Conservatives, New Democrats and the Ralliement Créditiste could invite witnesses. For example, such newspapers as *Le Soleil*, *Le Nouvelliste*, the *Quebec Chronicle Telegraph*, *Le Manitobain*, or others as *Le Patriote* and *Les Quotidiens du Québec Inc.* could be asked to express their opinions, so that officials would have plenty of time—since they like that—to study the possibility of transforming the Post Office Department in a Crown Corporation. If we do not do it today, we shall have to start all over again tomorrow. So, why not get at it right away?

• (4:40 p.m.)

I am therefore asking the minister to reconsider seriously his decision and to comply with the wish of the opposition thanks to his majority and to his authority, by referring the bill to a special committee which could thoroughly study the matter, and make the right to information prevail, while enabling the Post Office Department to provide an intelligent service without a deficit.

I believe that both are reconcilable Mr. Speaker; I think that it is possible to have a Post Office Department which would not incur a deficit and a right to information which would be respected and protected; in my opinion, both are possible. However, up to now, it seems to be impossible. Why? Because we do not take the necessary means and do not discuss the matter. What about the Montpetit report published in 1966 and the Anderson report published in 1965? What about the Carter report and the Royal Commission of inquiry on Banking and Finance?