

EFFECT OF POSTAGE ON NEWSPAPERS

AN EXAMINATION OF THE PROBLEM NOW CONFRONTING CANADIAN PUBLISHERS.

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THE Hon. Mr. Mulock's bill to reimpose the postage on newspapers will come into force shortly, and it will be interesting to note what effect it has upon the newspaper industry. The immediate result of it will probably be the suspension of some of the journals that are weak financially, while all of those which enjoy an extensive circulation will feel the imposition keenly. Various ways of meeting the burden will suggest themselves. In some instances the subscription price of the papers will be increased, in others the cost of production will be cut down either by curtailing the number of employes or reducing wages. In any case hardship will ensue and the conclusion is irresistible that the measure was both injudicious and unfair.

There are many reasons to be advanced in support of this contention. The newspaper business is the only business in Canada which is absolutely without protection in any form. The newspapers must pay duty on their presses, type, and paper. Everything they use is taxed, directly or indirectly, and they get nothing at all in return. In addition to this, the very Parliament which consents to carry papers mailed in the United States free of charge to any part of Canada, now proposes to make matters worse by making Canadian papers pay for transmission, not only to points in the United States, but to places within the Confederation. If anyone can see an atom of reason or justice in this, it would be interesting to discover where it lies. It is worse than unfair. It is extending to the business men of a foreign country a consideration refused to our own people.

One cannot but feel that the Postmaster-General devised this measure in absolute ignorance of the conditions under which Canadian newspapers have been published. To the proposition that newspapers should pay postage there can be no reasonable objection, but it must be borne in mind that the industry—which, as a whole, employs more men, pays more wages and put more money in circulation than any other industry in Canada—has been built up under free postage. The newspapers did not ask to have the postage cut off, but it was taken off and they adapted themselves to the new conditions. The reimposition of postage now means an upheaval in the journalistic world and will provoke an unsatisfactory, unsettled and damaging state of affairs, no matter what steps are taken to meet the conditions which the Act will bring about. When the postage was ordered to be reimposed the duty should have been struck off paper, type, presses and patent medicines, because with this specific tax upon them the newspapers should be able to get their raw material duty free and be placed in a position to compete for American advertising. If the American manufacturers were allowed to sell their goods in Canada free of duty, it would make a difference of thousands of dollars a year to the publishers of every Canadian paper.

It is a hard enough matter, under the best of circumstances, to make a newspaper pay in Canada—it is doubly hard in British Columbia. Only a baker's dozen of the Canadian papers are making over a few thousand dollars a year, and the majority of them barely manage to keep their heads above water. In

British Columbia the cost of wages, of paper, freight rates and telegraph tolls is so great that it is an almost hopeless task to make a large financial success of a journalistic enterprise. Printers get from \$21 a week up. Pressmen and stereotypers the same. The foreman of a news-room thinks he is underpaid if he gets less than \$25 a week. If the newspaper uses Mergenthaler machines a machinist is necessary, and he demands \$25 a week for his services. These wages run \$7, \$9, \$12, and \$14 per week greater than is paid in the east. The cost of living in British Columbia is greater than it is in Eastern Canada, but not two or three times as great. While these high wages are paid, the earning possibilities of the British Columbia newspapers are not as great as the papers of Toronto and Montreal. Their advertising rates are lower, and they are called upon to tie up capital to an extent that the eastern papers never dream of. The eastern papers never think of putting in more than one carload of paper at a time. There are three carloads of paper stored in The Province office at a time, and each one represents an expenditure of nearly a thousand dollars before the paper reaches this office.

Such facts as these might be extended indefinitely, but what has been said is sufficient to show the peculiar conditions surrounding this business of newspaper publishing and the peculiar hardship entailed upon publishers by the reimposition of postage. The Province is quite satisfied of one thing, and that is, that when the papers find out how the measure is hurting them, such an outcry will be made that the Act will be repealed, or the newspapers be permitted to get their raw material duty free, as they should.

CANADIAN PRESS ASSOCIATION.

PROGRAMME OF THE MEETING.

So far as arrangements are made for the meeting of The Canadian Press Association in Toronto, in February, the programme for the two days will be, provisionally, as follows:

THURSDAY MORNING

Reports of Executive and Secretary-Treasurer
President's Address.
Appointment of Committee on Resolutions.
Nomination of Officers.
Consideration of Kanloops Standard Case.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON.

"War Correspondence."—John A. Ewan.
"Presswork in Daily Offices."—L. J. Tarte.
"Collecting Subscriptions."—A. G. F. Macdonald. Open Conference.
"Presswork on Weeklies."—The President. Open Conference.
"The Newspapers and Agricultural Progress."—Prof. Jas. W. Robertson.
"How Newspapers May Increase Their Revenue."—John Bayne MacLean.

THURSDAY EVENING.

The usual banquet will be held, at which it is expected that Mr. E. L. Godkin, editor New York Evening Post, will be present.

FRIDAY MORNING.

"Tender Work for Municipal Printing."—Dan McGillicuddy. Open Conference.
"Use and Abuse of Plate Matter."—L. G. Jackson.
"Bureau of Forestry."—Thos. Southworth.
Election of Officers.

A publisher in eastern Ontario informs PRINTER AND PUBLISHER that there is an opening for an energetic man who wishes to purchase a weekly with a printing office attached. The paper has been a long time in existence and is the only Conservative paper in the county. Any inquiry will be sent in confidence to the publisher.