

Post Office Act

I have received telegrams from several newspapers in my riding. Among them is a telegram from the St. John's *Evening Telegram*, the largest newspaper in Newfoundland, and a telegram from the Corner Brook *Western Star*. Each of these papers draws attention to the seriousness of the legislation as it affects them as well as to the fact that it will cost in excess of \$30,000 a year in additional mailing and operational charges. It is reasonable to assume that the additional cost to the newspaper publishers will be passed on to the advertisers and subscribers. The net result will be that the extra charge will end up in the lap of the consumer. God knows, the average wage earner in Canada, particularly in the Atlantic provinces and in my own province of Newfoundland, has pretty well reached the breaking point and I cannot in all conscience subscribe to any legislation which would further aggravate his already critical situation.

● (5:20 p.m.)

In my view the increased rates proposed by the Postmaster General are a cowardly way of increasing taxation. As I have already stated, many of the people in my province are in desperate straits. We already face the highest cost of living in Canada. We already have the highest unemployment rate in Canada. What is even worse, we have the lowest income per capita in Canada. As a Newfoundlander and as a Canadian, how can I in all fairness subscribe to legislation which would have the effect of worsening this critical situation?

In part of my riding, as well as in a great many other areas in Newfoundland, it is impossible to receive television broadcasts. The only contact people have with the outside world is through the newspapers. Their only way of learning what is going on in Ottawa, in Biafra, in Washington or in Viet Nam is, by and large, through the newspapers.

I am charging the government here and now with discrimination in bringing in this legislation. The people who rely on newspapers for their information live for the most part in rural areas and must depend on the mails for delivery. City dwellers are able to go to the corner store, pay their money and pick up the papers they want. But the people in my riding who live in Placentia or Come-By-Chance or Trepassey—I could name hundreds of places—have to rely on the mails for newspaper deliveries. Consequently they are being discriminated against.

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I feel that to shut off a valued service of information to a substantial body of people can only be a disservice to democracy. The present low rates charged for the handling of newspapers are based on the desirability of maintaining an informed electorate, as is, I suppose, the annual subsidy to the C.B.C.—I believe the amount is \$140 million—which is by and large a medium of entertainment.

While this problem may not seriously affect the city areas it is a matter of vital concern to thousands of isolated Canadians who, if this legislation is passed, will no longer be able to afford to keep abreast of the times. I suggest that such a policy scarcely becomes a government which has paid a lot of lip service recently to a Canada which does not suffer disparities in services and opportunity.

While I am on this subject let me say I was alarmed to learn the other day that a large number of members of the hon. gentleman's own caucus were not informed of the proposal by the Postmaster General to increase these rates. This is an ironic commentary on the kind of democracy about which the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) spoke so often during the recent election campaign. I contend that this latest piece of muddleheaded legislation is a further mockery of the Prime Minister's just society and his promise to put an end to regional disparities.

While I am on the subject of regional disparity, may I say I am finding it extremely difficult to contain myself while I wait with bated breath to see what the government has in mind to help less fortunate provinces such as mine.

An hon. Member: Don't hold your breath too long.

Mr. Carter: I am not holding my breath now. I don't think I should because I don't know what will happen.

Up to now this government has done nothing to end regional disparity. Indeed, it has taken measures which widen the gap still further between the have and the have-not provinces. Let me give an example. I feel the house is becoming sick and tired of hearing about the salt rebate and fish generally, but hon. members had better get used to it because they are going to hear me talk a great deal about fish in the next few months. Fish should never leave a bad taste in the mouth. So I shall refer to the salt rebate again and draw attention to it as another indication of the Prime Minister's just society and his desire to end regional disparity. I