

*Post Office Act*

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Mr. Speaker, I must say that I used the expression "realistic". I have adopted the policy in this house for 11 years that no matter what I might wish to say I would always wait until the hon. gentleman speaking had finished. I would ask that the same courtesy be returned to me. The quotation from the minister's annual report was the last I have read in that particular connection. I would say that in our search for realistic figures, figures which can be translated to the reality of the day, we want a further examination of the document which the minister made available to us.

But apart from statistics there are broad areas for concern for the members of this house and the people whom we represent. This bill is far more important than a mere increase in the price of stamps. Flippant people may say the minister is suggesting that the people of Canada can lick their way into prosperity by paying more for stamps. But much more is involved than an appraisal of the stamp rate. The bill recognizes that the government has an important degree of involvement in the newspaper field.

I was impressed by the minister's remarks in respect of this very important field. This bill in a sense defines what is a Canadian newspaper. It sets an elaborate scale of rates. It becomes very much involved in the communication of ideas. The bill even invokes considerations of an international character. It singles out foreign publications and sets special rates for them. Some people would say that it sets preferential rates for some of them. It is, therefore, a tremendously important field. The newspapers in this country are very much concerned. Far be it for a member of this party to be overly solicitous about the welfare of Canadian newspapers. They have not been remarkably solicitous of our welfare in the last couple of decades. But they are important in any democracy.

The freedom of the press is not a new or esoteric concept. The minister has heard the views of many people in the newspaper field, as have most of us. One who has written to him is that always thoughtful and perceptive publisher of *Le Devoir*, Mr. Claude Ryan. I should like to quote a few portions from an open letter to the minister which appeared in this excellent newspaper, *Le Devoir*, on October 12. It begins with a great deal of well deserved praise for the minister. In fact, as I read the *Toronto Globe and Mail* this morning I was convinced that six cubits and a

span was far too short a measure by which to assess the real stature of this man. I was so impressed that I almost withdrew from the discourse altogether, but not quite. Mr. Ryan writes:

• (4:40 p.m.)

You have put in the position of a sacred fundamental principle of having a postal service which pays for itself. On this subject (certain) M.P.'s have asked you pertinent questions. While accepting the principle of a necessary equilibrium in the accounts of the government, they asked you by what criteria you decided particularly at this moment to penalize excessively certain very limited sectors of the groups which benefit every day from the ensemble of government activity. Why, for example, did you put in the position of a sacred principle the goal of a postal service which pays for itself when you will vote soon on considerable subsidies which have the intention of meeting the deficits of other sectors of government activity which could also have been chosen as areas of activity for your rationalizing abilities?...

Let us first speak of the raise in the postal rates for second class mail, which includes a newspaper like *Le Devoir*. If the figures which appeared in certain journals are well founded, you will double the cost of sending published material and you will change from four cents to fifteen cents per pound the cost of sending advertising material. Quick calculations have allowed us to establish that in the case of a newspaper like *Le Devoir*, these increases would bring with them a rise of approximately 275 per cent, compared with the costs which we have been used to.

Mr. Ryan argues his case with eloquence and, I think, with fairness. He makes a case to which the minister seems not overly sympathetic. He ends by saying:

Even if you had wanted, Mr. Kierans, to give to the daily newspapers with an average circulation a mortal blow, you would have had difficulty in imagining a more ingenious suggestion than that of which you have become the godfather. I know well your attachment to liberty of the press and to the right of citizens to have information. I know very well too your aptitude for changing your views when you are mistaken. It is for this that I hope that you will be able to revise in time the unacceptable and inequitable suggestions which you have revealed in Bill C-116.

The letter of Mr. Ryan and the presentations of many like him have raised some very, important questions. It is all very well to talk about the publishers, but we know what will happen when these rates are increased. We know who will end up paying the increases. It will be the citizen, the subscriber or, in the context of this debate, the patron of the post office. We cannot cast aside casually and lightly such representations as those of Mr. Ryan.

We spend millions trying to establish a national radio and television network for