

**Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, the weekly newspapers as a class were embarrassed probably the least of all the groups in the publishing industry, and their complaints have been far less than those of other groups. At the present time the people of Canada are paying approximately 86 per cent to 87 per cent of the costs of delivering weekly newspapers. We think that subsidy is too high, but that is what the taxpayers are presently contributing.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, it is of interest that the applause throughout the Liberal benches supports the minister's statement. That should be on the record. I ask the minister whether he is not going to give reconsideration to the strong representations that have been made by the Weekly Newspapers Association, to preserve this necessary element in the village and town life of our country?

**Mr. Kierans:** Mr. Speaker, I think I indicated in my answer that the present subsidy has reached a level of 86 per cent. I do not intend to increase that subsidy to 93 per cent or 94 per cent.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** They don't ask that.

**Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Postmaster General. Can he assure the house that the weekly newspapers will not be financially embarrassed right out of business?

#### RETENTION OF RURAL POST OFFICES PENDING SUBSTITUTION

**Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Postmaster General. Can he assure the house that there will be no close down of rural post offices until such time as adequate and satisfactory substitute service is available?

**Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, I think I can tell you that if we examine 100 post offices approximately 40 of them will remain open, generally speaking for the reason that the hon. member has suggested, that we cannot substitute a better service. In other words the mere fact that we examine 100 or 200 post offices does not mean that 100 or 200 will be closed.

#### *Inquiries of the Ministry*

#### EASTER DELIVERY—STEPS TO RELIEVE CONGESTION

**Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Postmaster General. In view of the fact that there will be no mail delivery on Good Friday this week and that post offices are closed on Saturday, does the Postmaster General propose to take any steps to alleviate the congestion of mail, so that we will have reasonable dispatch of the weekend three days mail delivery?

**Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, we have been working this out with the unions.

[*Translation*]

#### PUBLIC SERVICE

#### INQUIRY AS TO BILINGUAL BONUS

**Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the Prime Minister a question.

On January 17, 1967, as stated on page 11878 of the official debates of the house, the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson declared that the 7 per cent bonus for bilingual employees would be retroactive to October 1, 1966.

Could the Prime Minister tell the house when the order in council of October 1966 will be brought into force and if those civil servants can expect a salary adjustment before the bill concerning the official languages is passed?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** That question comes under the Secretary of State, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask that it be directed to him.

[*English*]

#### AIR TRANSPORT

#### MERGER BETWEEN AIR CANADA AND CANADIAN PACIFIC AIRLINES

**Mr. W. B. Nesbitt (Oxford):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. Is the Government of Canada presently conducting merger discussions regarding Canadian air services overseas with Canadian Pacific Airlines on behalf of Air Canada, or is Air Canada discussing this possibility directly with Canadian Pacific Airlines?

**Hon. Paul Hellyer (Minister of Transport):** To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, the answer is no to both questions.