

Post Office Act

propaganda heavily subsidized by the government, then we could indeed speak of patronage, but the newspapers have never benefited from any patronage on the part of the federal government. What we want to safeguard are industries and advertising media used by private enterprise, because we do not want some day to have a state-controlled press, and that is what is going to happen if the present situation persists. If our privately owned newspapers are continually harassed the way they are now, the day will come—and I am convinced that that is what the socialists in this house are hoping for—when we will have a state-controlled press, completely under the thumb of the government, which will say only what the government allows it to say.

● (8:20 p.m.)

This is now happening in the C.B.C. and when questions are asked about the C.B.C. the minister all but tells us that it none of our business. If we had such crown corporations, can one imagine how difficult it would be for the people to obtain trustworthy information? It would be difficult to live in such a democracy and it would be almost impossible to have so-called just society.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention at this stage a few telegrams which I have received and which the minister must also have received from our leading newspapers. I have here a telegram from the *Soleil* stating that 18 owners and directors of Quebec dailies have met with the minister and his officials.

I hope that the minister admits it.

Mr. Kierans: Yes.

Mr. Gauthier: The telegram adds that several ministers were also approached. I am sure that they went and knocked at his door and it seems that it did not change anything at all. The minister maintained his position. He decided that on his own, secretly in his office and I would say that he was prompted by his officials who are against private enterprise and who probably told him: "Do that, this is what you must do, you should tax the taxpayer again". It is again private enterprise which becomes the fall guy of this whole ill-planned administration and it is always the same tune: "Curses on the jackass!" let us fight against private enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, I have told the minister that we have received many telegrams from the directors of the leading newspapers—I need

[Mr. Gauthier.]

not read them for he is motioning to me that he has received them—even from the directors of the *Étoile du Lac* a weekly paper of my riding, who have also protested against the decision of the department. I think that the weekly papers are even more concerned, because I have heard that as a result of the adoption of such a measure at least 50 publications in the province of Quebec would disappear.

If that is the goal the minister is aiming at he only has to continue—he is well on his way—and, within two or three years, we will have only State newspapers to read. I have in hand a brief presented on October 17, 1968 which the minister had certainly received, as it was directed to him and I quote:

I have the honour, in my capacity of president of the Corporation des Quotidiens du Québec Inc., to represent here the French and English daily newspapers of Quebec. On their behalf, I wish to thank you for welcoming us—

The minister can see how polite they are. They begin by thanking him after they have received that staggering blow on the head.

We understand your concern for a healthy administration of government services under your jurisdiction and you know that the press is unanimous in encouraging this. Therefore, we do not intend to stand in the way of the reasonable measures which are under consideration to improve, if necessary, the postal services.

A normal increase would be acceptable; but no one wants to see the rates tripled.

We believe, however, that the proposed reforms, or some of them rather, should be studied again in order to avoid real injustices being perpetrated, even in good faith, or irrevocably damageable measures being adopted.

To set the records straight, let us say first of all that the recent consultation of the officials of your department concerning, particularly, the cancellation of Saturday deliveries, did not receive, on our part, the "extremely warm welcome" to which you alluded, in the house, on October 8th last. The decision of your department rather had the effect of a bomb on the Quebec newspaper publishers, as proved by the letters, invited by your officials, commenting on the decision. Copy of each one of those letters from the circulation department heads of the Quebec newspapers are herewith enclosed. We regret that we cannot confirm your words of October 8th last in this regard.

But the purpose of the meeting we have asked is far more serious. This morning, we will try to analyse briefly the situation that may stem from the passing or the continued application of the measures already announced by your department.

1. Increase in postal rates for second-class mail. Taking for granted that the figures supplied by your high officials are accurate, i.e. that the mailing rates for printed matter were being increased from \$0.025 to \$0.05 per pound, and from \$0.04 to \$0.15 per pound for publicity material, the results would be disastrous here.