

Post Office Act

Townships, signed by Mr. Marcel Rivard, a journalist from Victoriaville. I should like to read it to the minister, that he may know what the people think of him. All the hon. members have expressed the views of their constituents during our consideration of this bill, and I think the minister should know what the people of the riding of Lotbinière think of his bill. The editorial written by Marcel Rivard is entitled: "A stab in the back for the weekly papers".

The title alone gives us an idea of the atmosphere which prevails among the people. I quote the article in question:

The local weeklies seem prepared for an increase in the postal rates but they object to an increase which will triple the cost of their postal charges.

Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that under the present system, the government solutions can be but increases, increases and again increases of rates and taxes and it is always the little wage earner who foots the bill. Besides, as we saw again last night in the budget speech, the small wage earner will again pay more taxes for the benefit of the rich.

The bill introduced by the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) certainly does not find favour with the Quebec weeklies—and I should like the minister to listen to me—no more than with the dailies who will have to cut out their Saturday delivery. And Mr. Rivard continues:

Who will suffer from that bill, if it passed such as it is, if not principally the rural areas?

I have to mention that Marcel Rivard writes in several weeklies of the Bois-Franc and the eastern townships areas.

And that is why the weeklies including the eastern townships newspaper *L'Union*, do not agree with Mr. Kierans.

In fact, it is believed, and rightly so in some quarters, that the new Postmaster General considers his department as a business which must at any price show a significant profit at the end of a fiscal year—

And I add: even at the expense, of the Canadian citizen even if he knows it.

—as to the weeklies, they think that it is exactly the opposite—

For more than a decade, we have seen state television take away from them a more than significant portion of the so-called "national" commercial advertising—

Through state television which we finance with the taxpayers' money.

—because, with its system, television has crept in every area in Quebec and its penetration rate in the homes is quite high. However, the question

is whether state television has succeeded in taking away the exceptional role of the weekly which is to reflect the life of a community; it has not, and never will—Of the two, the television and the weekly, which is then the stronger?

• (4:30 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Marcel Rivard replies quite objectively.

The weekly paper.

Yesterday, the hon. member for Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin) made a very interesting and well documented speech. He explained the situation I have described, from another point of view. He listed a number of weeklies which are faced with problems and, here again, the minister makes no answer and keeps urging us to pass his bill.

Mr. Speaker, it is unthinkable that, in 1968, we have to tolerate a government which, to the knowledge of everybody, proves dictatorial to the point of imposing its views upon the people, in order to pave the way for a socialist regime.

Mr. Marcel Rivard continues and I quote:

It would seem that is not his intention, even less that of the minister Kierans, since the new legislation as introduced, without any precise wording, in the House of Commons constitutes—that is what is unfortunate and inadmissible—a stab in the back for the weeklies, a mortal wound for some of them.

And if tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, some weeklies, such as *L'Union des Cantons de l'Est*, *le Nouvelliste*, *Le Courrier-Sud*, *L'Echo de l'Abitibi*, *La Frontière*—and many more since there are over 150 in Quebec alone—are forced to fold, the population will have a right to say: If we lose our regional means of information which created a certain climate in our area and among us a feeling of friendship, which preserved our strength and vitality, it will be the fault of the nice and big Liberal party, it will be the fault of a nice and big majority government, it will be the fault of a group of Liberal members who will have lacked the courage to rise in the house to protest against measures that they know are drastic ones. They keep their seats and remain silent although they know what repercussions they might have. That pleases me to a certain extent because it shows the population that only members without any financial ties, free as the air they breathe—there are fourteen in the house, the members of the Ralliement Créditiste—who can stand up for private enterprise and the people in general.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.