

Post Office

Let us for a moment look at the Treasury Board, the board which is given responsibility by the government of negotiating with the postal employees. As I have already indicated, this board is tough when it deals with the postal employees. It seems to want to protect every penny the people of Canada pay to the postal employees and to see that there is no waste and no generosity. The Treasury Board wishes to keep our taxes down. Let us look at the situation in respect of the Treasury Board. In January 1970, it had a staff of 443. By January of 1973 it had a staff of 590, an increase, as I make it, of about 25 per cent. In January of 1970, the Treasury Board had 185 people on staff who were earning \$15,000 a year or more. In January of 1973, that salary had increased to \$18,000 a year! So, allowing for the increase in the cost of living and the inflation about which we are all supposed to be worried, there were 261 people in that group, an increase of 50 per cent. I point out that almost every second employee on the rolls of the Treasury Board was earning over \$18,000 a year and that every sixth employee, of which there are 104, was earning over \$25,000 a year.

So, Mr. Speaker, you see the picture. Because the employees of the post office have shown they are a militant group they have collective bargaining. They have to be tough. They have their fears and they become involved in long drawn out and constant negotiations, because if they want anything they must go on strike. What about management? I have already indicated the kind of increases management has received which I would say are very substantial, completely unjustified and completely indefensible. Do these people have to go through the process of collective bargaining? No. They could not dirty their hands in that way. They do not have to go to collective bargaining. They are dealt with in a different way. For them, we have an advisory committee which looks at their salaries.

This advisory committee supposedly consults with private industry and makes recommendations to the government concerning what should be done. The advisory committee obviously has done very well for the senior officials of the postal department and other departments, particularly the Treasury Board. Who are some of the people on the advisory committee which suggests to the government what it should do? The first chairman was Mr. Clyne, a former chief justice in British Columbia. At the time he was the chairman of the advisory committee he was also the chairman of the board of McMillan, Bloedel, one of the largest companies in British Columbia, if not in all of Canada. Mr. Clyne has been noted for the speeches in which he has called on governments and employers to watch costs and not be too generous with employees because if the employees are allowed to have large wage increases we will have inflation and will price ourselves out of world markets.

Well, he certainly was not very tough with senior civil servants employed by the Government of Canada. Who is a recent appointee to this advisory committee? Well, it is Mr. DeGranpre. Who is he, Mr. Speaker? He is the President of Bell Canada.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[Mr. Orlikow.]

Mr. Orlikow: When Bell Canada increases its rates which the people of Ontario and Quebec must pay, it must make an application to the Canadian Transport Commission. What does that commission do with it? I presume it sends that application for study and analysis to its employees. Its senior employees who will be making the recommendation are the very employees who have been dealt with so generously by an advisory committee of which Mr. DeGranpre is a member. They are supposed to be impartial; they are supposed to protect the public interest, and yet the salary increases they will get in the next year or two will depend, to a large extent, on the advice that the government receives from Mr. DeGranpre.

● (1250)

I suggest to you that there is a conflict of interest there. I suggest, that, to say the least, it is immoral and improper for the government to appoint a person who has the stake that Mr. DeGranpre has in decisions made by a government agency and who has a great deal of say with regard to the salaries and working conditions of senior civil servants.

I say to the Postmaster General that if he wants to improve the role of the post office, to improve the service, and to improve the morale of the postal employees, which has, I am sure he will agree, not been very high in recent years, the best thing he could do would be to go back to his cabinet colleagues and insist that the responsibility for the bargaining which must take place between his department and its employees should be taken away from the Treasury Board. The Treasury Board has failed significantly in dealing fairly with the employees of the post office so responsibility for bargaining should be given back to his department because, despite its failings in the past, of which there are many and this is not the time to talk about them, there is no possible way in which his department could do the completely inadequate and disastrous job which the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) and his senior officials have done in recent years.

I say to the minister—and I say this in a sincere way and wishing him the best—that if he wants to be remembered as a good Postmaster General, the best thing he can do is to get back the right to conduct the negotiation so his employees can be dealt with fairly, honestly, and in a friendly way, rather than in the antagonistic and miserable way in which the Treasury Board has conducted negotiations in these past number of years.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I was a little anxious; I had hoped that the member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) would have been a little more voluble and would have continued his speech until one o'clock. I wonder if the House would agree that I call it one o'clock so that I do not have to begin my remarks and stop them right away.

Mr. Speaker: Does the House agree?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume its sitting at two o'clock.

At one o'clock the House took recess.