

*Post Office*

have experienced another postal strike last fall as a result of the high handed manner of the Treasury Board in negotiating. Let us listen to the employees' complaints. Let us bring the post office department back to the service of the people. This can only be done if the Postmaster General will abandon his ivory tower attitude, communicate with the people and listen to members of parliament. I am sure he will hear plenty from them today.

**Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North):** Mr. Speaker, the resolution we are discussing today is, to a great extent, the result of the failings and shortcomings of the postal system in Canada. I intend to deal specifically with the problems listed in the resolution, namely "job insecurity and low morale among employees". It seems obvious to me that any person in Canada, not just members of parliament, could hardly avoid noticing the difficulties we have experienced in the postal department in the past 10 years. Let me go over that list of difficulties very briefly.

In 1965, we had a wildcat strike on the part of postal employees. In 1968, we had a legal strike and in 1970 we had a rotational strike. I suggest the reason for this difficulty lies in the fact that the government would not accept the recommendation of the chairman of the conciliation board. This year we almost had another strike, and the reason for that was that the conciliation board members brought in three different recommendations followed by another recommendation by the chairman. The unions accepted that recommendation.

In spite of repeated representations by employees and members of parliament of various parties, the government insisted on misinterpreting the recommendation of the chairman of that board. Only after the government realized the employees would call another strike did they agree to an earlier proposal of the union to go back to the chairman of the board to have him clear up what he meant by his recommendation. When that was done it became obvious, even to the government and its negotiating team, that the interpretation by the union of the chairman's recommendation was correct and the government's interpretation was wrong. That is the record for the last 10 years.

What are the reasons for these strikes which give a clear indication that the employees in the postal department are unhappy? I suggest there is low morale among this group of employees. The fact that this situation leads to difficulties in mail delivery should be obvious to everyone. I suggest that this low morale is the result of a suspicion on the part of employees that they cannot get satisfaction from the minister and senior officials of the Treasury Board during negotiations. There has not been one single, genuine or generous offer made by the Treasury Board or the minister's officials in the past six or eight years so far as postal employees are concerned. Everything the postal employees have been offered has been offered in a grudging, stingy and parsimonious way. Nothing has been offered voluntarily with the result that postal employees, both letter carriers and clerks, know they must fight whenever they want a change. I suggest this suspicion on the part of these employees is well founded.

Let me put on the record what these employees have received as a result of difficult negotiation with the government, two strikes and the threat of more. Let me

compare the attitude of officials of the Treasury Board in respect of postal employees with their attitude in dealing with other employees who do not enjoy the benefits of the Public Service Staff Relations Act, and others who do not enjoy the rights of collective bargaining. Let me compare the way in which the Treasury Board deals with senior officials in the postal department and other departments with the almost incestuous way it deals with senior officials in the Treasury Board.

In 1968, the median pay for letter carriers was \$5,751. By 1972 that had gone up to \$7,701, an increase of approximately \$2,000. The pay rate of an E.S.1, that is a starting economist, working for the government in 1968 was \$8,280. By 1972 that had gone up to \$14,192, an increase of almost \$6,000 in those few years. The gap in median rates of pay for a letter carrier and a starting economist had increased by \$1,100 in those few years. In 1972 the gap had widened to \$2,353. For an ES-4, a senior economist, the pay was \$12,000. In 1972, it had jumped to over \$16,000, an increase of more than \$4,000. Let us compare a letter carrier with an SX 1, a branch director. In 1968, the SX 1 officer had a salary of \$13,751 and by 1972 this had jumped to \$16,777, an increase of over \$3,000.

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Then, we might compare a letter carrier with a senior assistant deputy minister in the postal department. In 1968, the gap between their median salaries was \$21,000 and by 1972 it had increased to well over \$28,000. Or we might compare a postal clerk and the ES 1. The gap between them in 1968 was \$822 and in 1972 it had increased to \$2,600. Next, we might compare the postal clerk to the ES 4. In 1968, the gap was \$11,700 and in 1972 it was almost \$16,000. Then, when we compare the postal clerk to the SX 1 we find that the gap in 1968 was \$13,400 and in 1972 it was \$16,480. In comparing the postal clerk to the SX 4, we find that in 1968 the gap was \$20,700 while in 1972 it was \$28,486. What does this indicate? It indicates a scale of values on the part of the minister in charge of the Treasury Board and on the part of those he appoints to do the negotiating which indicates that those who have shall get, and that those who have been poor will continue to be poor.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Or lose what they already have.

**Mr. Orlikow:** Or, as my colleague from Winnipeg North Centre says, lose what they already have. Let us look at the number of employees in the operational side of government and the number of employees in the senior executive and professional staffs. The figures I have come from Statistics Canada. The number of people in the operational category who work for government, which of course includes postal workers, according to Statistics Canada has increased, from the year 1970 to the year 1972, by 0.8 per cent. That is 8/10 of 1 per cent. However, if you look at the number of employees in the executive, scientific and professional categories the number has increased from 1970 to 1972 by 22½ per cent. Then if you look at the number of senior people in the administrative and foreign service groups, the number has increased by 20.8 per cent.