

*The Address—Mr. Dupuis*

Now I wish to discuss a matter which I have already mentioned in the house, namely, civil service salaries and the increase made necessary by the steady rise in the cost of living.

I understand that those good public servants will shortly receive a substantial increase. Far be it from me to claim credit for it, but I am happy to find that the government has willingly granted the numerous requests similar to mine which they have received from various quarters.

Now this commendable step should, however, be completed by a reclassification of the various positions, in order to place on the same footing, in regard to salaries, all those who perform work similar to that of other employees and who receive less than their colleagues whose duties do not require any more knowledge or effort.

The wages paid to the unskilled workers, those we call the day-labourers, should be checked in all departments in order to find out if they are in keeping with the work required from the men and with the cost of living.

Of course the wages paid to this class of workers must correspond to those paid for similar work in industry and trade. Still I maintain it would not be superfluous to make a survey in this regard in order to correct any shortcomings if not injustices, quite unintentional, I dare say, affecting certain workers.

I am pleased to congratulate the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Fournier) and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) for the increase of thirteen cents an hour granted to the women looking after the cleaning and the maintenance of government offices. This action does them honour and I have been asked to extend to these two distinguished members of the government the most sincere thanks of the people concerned.

I also express the wish that the pension paid to veterans of both wars will be increased, because like everyone else they are suffering from constantly rising prices.

We all deplore the high cost of living, which is the great problem of all those who look after a family budget. In that connection, I wish to repeat what I said previously.

In my opinion, we cannot freeze prices at their present high level and salaries at the low level now paid to a very large number of people.

Before thinking of price and wage controls, we should provide a decent salary to the

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small wage-earners, unskilled workers, and office workers who today are not earning enough to cope with the present high cost of living and must resort to work outside their regular employment in order to make both ends meet. Due to inadequate incomes, several families have to go without some essential commodities. We should first find a solution to that problem before speaking of controlling prices and freezing wages.

Recently, representatives from all labour unions have asked that the Unemployment Insurance Act be amended in order to reduce the number of days that must elapse between the time the worker loses his job and the time he begins to receive his unemployment benefits.

It seems to me that the reserves accumulated by the commission are sufficiently large to allow such liberalities. In any event, I do hope that the government will see its way clear to afford this timely suggestion the attention it deserves.

Before concluding these remarks I once again call the attention of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier) to the appropriateness of doing away with toll charges on the Jacques Cartier and Victoria bridges. The construction costs of the latter structure have been written off long ago. As for the former, it is true \$19,000,000 still remains to be paid on it, but that is no reason to impose an additional indirect tax on the residents of Montreal and the adjoining district who use this route every day.

Why not discuss it with provincial and municipal authorities with a view to reaching a sensible arrangement in so far as the writing off of this debt and maintenance costs are concerned?

Such an arrangement would be likely to do justice to all the people of our province, since they all have to use this bridge. It should be noted that this means of communication serves tourists from all parts of the country and that they too must pay this indirect tax. But there are not many of them and the greater part of the burden must be borne by the people of Montreal and vicinity.

I intend to move a motion, at the next session, to request the abolition of toll charges on those bridges. If the government cannot grant my request, they might at least be able to abolish the price charged passengers in cars.