

Supply—Civil Service Salaries

I do not wonder that the civil servants, however loyal they may be to the service, hesitate to accept willingly an increase of only 81 cents per week. I do not think it is fair to them. To put the matter in the words of the Amalgamated Civil Servants of Canada, a western organization:

We refer to the recent announcement on civil service salaries wherein it states "that a general increase in salaries to be effective April 1, 1927 on the following basis, \$120 increase to all civil servants except junior clerks grade I and those who received an increase in salary of \$180 in 1924, who are to receive an increase in salary of \$60 per annum." We beg to say that no civil servant to our knowledge received an increase in remuneration of \$180 in 1924. It is true that certain classes had \$180 added to salary range, but the civil servants in those classes at the same time lost an equal or greater amount in pay by the abolition of the bonus.

If that statement is correct, a great deal of what the Secretary of State has said is not really relevant in this connection. I read on:

Now we find that this reduction, or at the best equalization of pay, is called an \$180 increase for the purpose of depriving civil servants affected of the full benefit of the new increase. This is camouflage of the worst kind, and certainly cannot be calculated to ensure that esprit de corps which is necessary for a good and efficient service.

A few illustrations will suffice. A letter carrier at his maximum in 1920 received \$1,656 per annum, in 1921 he was reduced to \$1,458, in 1924 after the so-called \$180 increase he still received \$1,458 and under the new revision of 1927 will receive \$1,500, an increase not of \$60 but \$42, which still leaves him with \$156 per annum less than he received in 1920. Postal clerks in western Canada under the new revision will have a maximum salary only \$60 greater than in pre-war days, despite his so-called \$180 increase in 1924.

It will be noted that while in the above illustrations we quote figures paid to postal employees, we wish particularly to emphasize the fact that the same is true in all other departments because the salaries in all departments are interrelated.

I do not want to delay the House, but I venture to assert that greater consideration is constantly being given to the more highly paid officials, and I would urge that we attempt to deal fairly with these lower paid men who have not the same opportunity of making their influence felt.

Reference was made to the vote for the new building at Washington. I voted last night in favour of it simply because it seemed to me that if we were going to keep up the standards that were proposed it was a good business proposition. Personally I do not agree with the idea of keeping up those standards. It seems to me that we can maintain our dignity in some other way than by lavish hospitality, or

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

conforming to certain elaborate and extravagant standards. The purchase of the building seemed a good proposition, and that is the reason I voted for it. But surely it is also beneath the dignity of Canada to pay less than a decent wage to our employees. By the vote last night we decided to keep up the dignity of one Canadian by voting—

An hon. MEMBER: The hon. gentleman voted for it.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Yes, because as I said this House was of opinion that a certain style should be maintained, and the amendment itself made provision for an additional amount for the year in order to maintain that standard.

An hon. MEMBER: Too thin.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: And I said if we are going to maintain that standard it seems best to do it in a business-like way, as was suggested by the government. I am not discussing the vote of last night, except as an illustration. I say it was generally considered, admitted by both sides of the House, that the dignity of Canada should be maintained, and the amendment itself provided for maintaining it on that scale. To-day I urge that we ought to maintain our dignity by paying something like a reasonable amount to our employees. We are paying far below that which is being paid in the United States. Why should we not have as great a pride in paying high salaries as we have in spending a large sum of money for the purpose of standing well with the comparatively limited group of people who may visit the embassy and be impressed by the scale on which our offices are maintained in Washington? I would urge that the government should even at this stage give careful consideration to the representations that are being made by the rank and file of the people from one end of the country to the other, and revise the proposed salary scale. The men have been waiting a long time. Personally I think they have been waiting with a good deal of patience, and since the government is assured of general support in the House for any move of this character, I cannot see why they could not afford to be generous.

Mr. HANSON: If the department and the government cannot see their way to give this increase to the letter carriers as well as to the mail clerks, then I will confine my plea to the mail clerks. There are seventeen hundred of them. The \$60 increase would amount to \$102,000 a year. That is not a very