

*Post Office*

inviting the postal workers to go out on strike immediately. But, Mr. Speaker, his statements are no different from, nor worse than, the statements of the President of the Treasury Board.

What about the so called negotiators for the government? Mr. Harper held a press conference yesterday, at which he said a fair settlement for the postal workers would be less than the 6 per cent maximum increase which the government has indicated in its wage guidelines. How irresponsible can the government get?

According to the *Globe and Mail* of May 30 Mr. Monk, another great government negotiator, criticized the postal unions for launching what he called a campaign of callous harassment of the innocent public. I quote from the newspaper:

He combined the accusation with an angry denunciation of the union's bargaining team, which he said had refused to negotiate with representatives of the Treasury Board and the Post Office—

Mr. Monk told reporters that the government negotiators had proposed that the wage negotiations begin with a discussion of the proposals of Keith Campbell, the government's nominee on the conciliation board.

—Mr. Monk conceded that the Treasury Board negotiators have not suggested that the wage negotiations centre around the proposals of Judge Rene Lippe, the chairman of the conciliation board, who proposed a 50 cent an hour increase over the life of a new agreement.

In other words, Mr. Monk, a supposedly competent negotiator, says that unless the postal workers are prepared to negotiate on the basis of what the government representative on the conciliation board recommended, they are not being responsible. If the Postmaster General wants to get this contract settled, I suggest he had better send Mr. Monk off to a different job because he knows nothing about negotiations. He knows even less about them than does the Postmaster General.

And as if that were not bad enough, we had the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) making statements, during his tour last week-end, about the wages of postal workers, statements which were factually incorrect. Let me quote from the letter sent to the Prime Minister by the President of the Letter Carriers Union of Canada and the President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers on June 25. I will quote just a couple of sentences in which they object to the figures mentioned by the Prime Minister, and which they say are untrue.

We refer particularly to week end statements quoted widely in Monday's press. You are quoted as having said the average postal worker's wage is \$3.30 an hour.

[Mr. Orlikow.]

I do not want to use unparliamentary language, even when I quote somebody else, and so I content myself with saying that the letter indicates the figures used by the Prime Minister are untrue. The letter goes on to say:

In fact, the range of wage rates is from \$2.57 an hour to \$3.24 an hour. Only approximately 2,000 of the 27,000 postal workers are eligible to earn the maximum rate of \$3.24. The postman who delivers the mail to your door earns \$2.99 an hour, provided he has been on this job for at least three years.

In the same statement you are quoted as placing the national average of industrial workers in Canada at \$2.65 an hour. This is also not true. According to the latest figures of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics the national average is \$3.11 an hour.

In other words, the Prime Minister exaggerated the wages paid to postal workers, and underestimated the average wages paid to industrial workers. Why is this being done? Why are we in these difficulties? I suggest there are two main issues.

The postal workers are worried by the extravagant claims which the Postmaster General made over a period of months about how automation of the Post Office would lead to much greater efficiency and to large savings. What does that mean to the ordinary worker? It means that there will be a reduction in the number of workers required. As a result, in the workers' negotiations with the government, they are asking for guarantees on job security. They would be less than human if they did not ask for this. In fact, they would be downright foolish.

Then, very late in the negotiations, the Postmaster General started saying that there would be so much mail the Post Office would need more workers, and he implied that there would not be lay-offs. If there will not be lay-offs, why doesn't the government offer a job security plan? I am not saying that the government necessarily has to grant the request of the unions, giving a guarantee that no employee will be laid off. Many private industries have job security plans. Why can't the government have such a plan?

The second problem concerns the wage increase which the employees want. It is obvious to me that the postal workers are being asked to be the "patsies" for the unilateral decision made by the government that workers should not get more than a 6 per cent increase in their wages. That guideline has been shattered by virtually all groups of workers in both the public and private sectors who have signed wage agreements in the last couple of months.