

ers can retire on 75 per cent of their best five year's income after 25 years on the job.

I see it is ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker, and I think this is a good point to stop.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has a third point to make, so perhaps it could be agreed that it is ten o'clock. Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

SUPPLY AND SERVICES—POSSIBLE CONTRACT TO AMERICAN CHAIN AND CABLE COMPANY FOR MAIL SORTING EQUIPMENT—SUGGESTED POSTPONEMENT OF DECISION

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to see the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer) in the House tonight, because I asked him a question on October 19 and at that time the hon. gentleman replied that he was aware of the subject I was raising in the question period and he would be pleased to review the particulars and inform me as soon as possible. Tonight we are going to give the hon. gentleman that opportunity.

I am concerned about the progress of mechanization that is going forward with some extreme speed in the Post Office Department. The responsibility for supplying the equipment has been placed in the hands of the Department of Supply and Services, and judging from statements of the Post Office Department they are speeding up the operation toward mechanization in an attempt to sort out the growing confusion in the Post Office Department and the rapid deterioration in the quality of service.

As the official spokesman for the opposition on this matter, I am inundated daily with complaints by hon. members from all parts of Canada that the postal service is far from satisfactory. When these matters are brought to his attention, the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) invariably says, "Wait until we mechanize." Apparently that will be the dawning of the age of Aquarius.

The question I asked had to do with an important contract which will be vital in the success of the mechanization program. I do not think I have to give the details because I believe the minister is fully aware of them, but it is a contract for provision of bulk sorters in the major centres across Canada. The delivery date of this new equipment is vitally important. In order to meet the requirements of the delivery date it will be necessary for the manufacturer handling the task to be technically qualified, and also to have had some experience in the production of this mechanical sorting equipment. My investigations reveal that very few companies have had any experience in this field, largely because it is new; and

Adjournment Debate

countries that are already mechanized, primarily the United States, have only recently become so. Of the companies submitting tenders for this contract, only one has really had the necessary experience and has demonstrated the competence required. They are now into three generations of production equipment. Huge expenditures are involved and the total cost will be around \$100 million. Of that amount, \$80 million will be for the coders and sorters.

● (2200)

The day I asked the minister the question he indicated that the contract had already been awarded to a company that did not meet the specifications for a performance-type contract. However, I do not think that information is correct. One of the major deficiencies was the failure to provide a mechanically-assisted sorter. The Canadian Post Office project officers on the project objected, so too did the consultant, Cole Sherman and Associates Limited of Toronto, who had been hired by the Post Office Department. These objections were overruled by the Department of Supply and Services' officials and the project officer for this specific contract was withdrawn from the evaluation process at the request of that department.

As a result of the negotiations that are going on behind the scenes there will be a delay in delivery from the proposed date of October, 1974, to January, 1975. The cost of the time slippage is approximately \$100,000 a day, because if the machinery is not in place it is necessary to have two parallel staffs, those who will operate the equipment and those who will carry on in the normal sorting manual process in the event of failure of the mechanical process to go into operation at the prescribed time.

It will be readily seen, Mr. Speaker, that if there is a foul-up in the mechanization process, the confusion that currently reigns supreme in the Post Office Department will be compounded to a state of chaos. The other companies which have submitted tenders are competitive in their bids. I raise this question now because I think all hon. members are aware that one of the difficulties which arose in connection with the Unemployment Insurance Commission was the failure of its computerization program. I am still getting complaints daily because this problem has not been entirely corrected.

I am sure the minister will agree that the most precise care will be necessary to ensure that the most qualified bidder is considered for this contract.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I should like first of all to apologize to the hon. member if I gave the impression that the contract had already been awarded. As a matter of fact, the contract is not yet awarded; it is still under active consideration. I am sure the hon. member will understand that it would be improper for me to disclose the negotiations which are presently taking place.

I should like to assure the hon. member, however, that I spent a lot of time reviewing this question with my officials, and the fact that the hon. member is still attracting my attention to the question is appreciated. The hon. member placed the question on the order paper on October