

Mr. **POULIOT**: Referring to what has just been said about mail contracts, it is undoubtedly true that the contracts are often awarded for rural mail delivery at a very low figure. Not only that, but the lucky man who gets the contract often does no work on it himself but sublets it to a poor slave who has to work for half the price, and the original contractor gets the difference for doing nothing, just because he got the contract. There are many such cases of privileged so-called mail carriers who carry nothing but their cheques and have the mail delivered by another person. Such cases occur quite frequently, and I draw the attention of those concerned to the matter.

Fair wages should apply not only to the labour employed directly on the contract but to the labour employed indirectly in the manufacture of the materials used. Suppose a firm has a contract to construct a post office terminal in Montreal and the contract contains a fair wage clause. Fair wages may be paid to the men who are working directly on the building, but perhaps not in the case of different materials needed. The contractor, who may want to obtain his cut stone as cheaply as possible, goes to a quarry and offers a price. In order to meet that price it is necessary for the owner of the quarry to work his men under sweatshop conditions. The contractor who is really acting for the government forces the owner of the quarry to pay very small wages to men who must work like slaves. I direct the attention of the minister to this matter.

I would direct the attention of the minister also to the wages paid to lumberjacks. A few years ago these men were able to go into the woods for a few months in the winter and come back with a few hundred dollars. In some cases three or four members of a family would go into the woods and they brought back considerable money. Why was that possible? Because decent wages were paid. It is different to-day. I have personal knowledge of several cases where lumberjacks have returned after a winter's work with only a few cents in their pockets. Many others have had to beg their way home; they had nothing to show for their work. I am convinced that even though the price of pulpwood is increased through government intervention it has no effect upon the wages paid. A delegation of pulpwood magnates interviewed the government last year in connection with the price of this commodity, but I think it is a great mistake to give concessions to these men without making sure that better conditions will prevail for the workers. I believe that whole meeting

[Mr. W. A. Fraser.]

was pure bluff. They stated that if they received a higher price for their pulpwood they would pay higher wages to the men, but this was not done. One company refused to accept the agreement and the prices of pulpwood and newsprint fell immediately and the men were no better off than they were before. During the last elections these men were told that it would make no difference if more had to be paid for agricultural implements and other things like that because the workingman would receive higher wages under the new government. The results have shown that that was an illusion. The government should try to remedy this matter.

There is another matter I should like to take up in connection with the concentration camps where the men receive a wage of twenty cents a day. What is the use of talking about minimum wages when this small amount is paid to these men?

Mr. **GORDON**: It is not a wage and it was never intended to be a wage.

Mr. **POULIOT**: It may be a gratuity, but whether it is called a gratuity, an indemnity or a salary, it amounts to the same thing. I admit that the men also are fed, but the food is much better on the days the inspector arrives than it is on ordinary days. I do not want to be hard on the minister but I must bring these matters to his attention. It is ridiculous to talk about minimum wages when the men in these camps are being paid only twenty cents a day. This is an important matter, but I shall not insist upon it too much if the lumberjacks are treated better. I do not blame only the minister for this but I think he should see that something is done in order that better conditions shall prevail.

Mr. **FRASER** (Northumberland): The minister says that he does not call the twenty cents a day received by the men in these camps a wage; he may call it a dole or a gratuity, but is he cognizant of the fact that these men work eight hours a day on the construction of public works? Surely the twenty cents per day plus their clothing and food is a wage. I am not a constitutional lawyer, but in my opinion the Minister of Labour is permitting this legislation to be infringed upon or nullified by having these unemployed men used on the construction of public buildings and paying them only twenty cents per day plus food and clothing. How can this or any other government expect business to adopt ethical practices, through legislation or otherwise, when this government is contracting for clothing manufactured under