

Postal Service Policies

inability of the government and this minister to deal with the serious situation, indeed the crisis, which exists in connection with the post office not just at the moment but which has been existing since this minister took office. I pointed out that despite all the flowery phrases of the Minister of Labour promising that we would have legislation embodying the principles of the Freedman commission report, that promise has not been fulfilled. One of the principles in that report was, when there are changes in employment practices as a result of technological change several things must happen. The first is that the employer must give notice of six months or more. The second is that the employer must be prepared to bargain with the employees and their representatives about the changes.

Here, we have a minister who has promised large and important changes in technology which will affect a number of employees, and yet the government has made no effort to implement the recommendations of the Freedman report. Mr. Justice Freedman said that these things should be achieved through collective bargaining, which is obviously an opinion this minister does not share, otherwise these things would not be under discussion now. We should have had the legislation implementing the Freedman report.

Like my friend from Hillsborough, I do not wish to discuss the negotiations which are now taking place. I have already dealt with the problems which arose out of the failure of the government to reach an agreement concerning the changes which will result from the technological advances that are planned. The other important issue is wages. Here the employees have asked for an increase over the next couple of years of 10 per cent per year. The government has come back with a final offer of 5 per cent per year. I do not know whether or not the minister went to the trouble of obtaining the reports of the debates of the Canadian labour congress convention, but there is a general feeling that the government is using the dispute with the postal workers to lay down guidelines to the effect that there shall not be more than a 5 per cent increase in wages in a year.

Mr. Paul Gérin-Lajoie, vice-president of the Prices and Incomes Commission, made a speech about a week ago before the chamber of commerce in which he suggested that wage increases should not exceed 4 per cent per year. He justified this figure by combining a two and a half per cent productivity increase

[Mr. Orlikow.]

with a one and a half per cent price increase. I shall not debate the justification of this in terms of economics because this is not the place to do so, and it has been done before. However, it is not good grace on the part of this government to lecture postal employees and others who are earning in the neighbourhood of \$5,000 or \$6,000 about the need for restraint, when the government has shown itself so ready to be generous to civil servants at the top level. Let me point out to the minister, if he does not know, that the deputy minister of finance, who three years ago was receiving \$27,000, is now receiving \$40,000 a year. That is an increase in three years of \$13,000. I calculate that to be an increase of 48 per cent in three years or a yearly increase of about 16 per cent.

Is it any wonder that postal employees who are earning \$5,000 or \$6,000 a year say that if the deputy minister of finance can get an increase of this size they want one, too? The salary of the Governor of the Bank of Canada has gone up from \$50,000 a year to \$75,000 a year with, I presume, a similar increase in his pension and other benefits. At the same time, he lectures people at the lower end of the salary scale, about their responsibility and the need to show restraint in the face of our galloping inflation. If the Governor of the Bank of Canada can get an increase of this size, the Postal workers want one, too. I know also that the deputy minister of communications has done equally well in his position. I am not surprised that the employees are saying they want to do what others are doing, and they are not prepared to be used as guinea pigs to force a set of guidelines which are improper and unfair on other employees. They are not prepared to be the example of what the guidelines should be, and of what the restrictions should be, in respect of other employees. We talk about restraint. In the history of government in Canada I do not think there has ever been such an explosive increase in the number of ministerial assistants.

• (2:10 p.m.)

We have never had so many deputy and assistant deputy ministers, special consultants, executive assistants and special assistants. We have never had that kind of increase in staff—and today is not the time to go into detail on this—as we have seen in the Prime Minister's (Mr. Trudeau) office, a doubling and a redoubling of staff and a doubling and a redoubling of people earning \$15,000 a year