

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

there is no other place which could be used as a post office.

I must say that, in respect of any post office, we sometimes have complaints. When complaints are made we conduct the fullest possible investigation. There are some specific points which have been raised in the question of the hon. member for Skeena. This week I intend to give a full answer to the charges concerning Eaton's and Simpson's catalogues, and the matter of the letters and cheques addressed to a person by the name of Martin. I shall try in my answer to be as fair as possible to all parties and indicate exactly what the position of the post office is in this matter.

● (10:10 p.m.)

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—INDIA—REPORTED
UNJUST TREATMENT OF CANADIAN
ENGINEER

Mr. J. Chester MacRae (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the provision in our procedure which permits me to raise a matter in which I am deeply interested and which I raised on Friday last. It concerns litigation involving a Canadian citizen, who is a professional engineer, Geoffrey P. Webb, and The Government of India. Their circumstances of this particular case are as follows, and I want to put them on the record for the first time. I have no doubt they will be raised on many occasions in the future until the situation is resolved.

Mr. Webb served in India for two years as a professional engineer on the Kundah hydro electric project, which is financed through the external aid office under the Colombo plan. Plants three and four of the project, the equipment and engineering services, were gifts from Canada to the people of India. At the end of Mr. Webb's service there in September 1965—some 16 months ago—he followed the normal procedure in such cases and turned his automobile over to the State Trading Corporation of India. I assume he turned over other assets as well.

The State Trading Corporation agreed to pay Mr. Webb 14,508 rupees which were to be converted into dollars at the rate existing at that time. This would amount in Canadian dollars to approximately \$3,300. In January of 1966, a year ago, a cheque was issued to Mr. Webb for the agreed amount, and then the trouble began. From that point on it seems to me there began a period of stalling tactics on the part of the government of India. Mr. Webb had a cheque but he could not negotiate it as a result of difficulties put in his way, and

could not arrange for a dollar draft to be issued for the 14,000 rupees.

Finally in June of 1966 the rupee, as we all know, was devalued from 4.76 to 7.5 in relation to the United States dollar. At that particular point or within a few weeks the government of India was prepared to pay Mr. Webb for his car at the devalued rate. Because he was not paid in the six month period between the issuance of the cheque and the devaluation he stands to lose some \$1,200. So far as I am able to determine this occurred through no fault whatsoever of Mr. Webb. He has been advised on several occasions, directly and through the Department of External Affairs, that he will be paid at the devalued rate. Mr. Webb is not willing to accept less than the agreed price for his car.

The whole transaction could have been completed long before this devaluation, and I feel that Mr. Webb is receiving completely unfair treatment from the government of India. I have not had much experience in matters of this kind, but presumably those members here who belong to the legal profession encounter a good deal more of this kind of thing. It seems to me that if relations between our two nations were not as good as they are, and if India was not a nation to which Canada had given generous help on many occasions, this situation might be understood. We often hear of situations in which people run into difficulties, particularly in matters of immigration, with countries behind the iron curtain. Recently this country sent a very large shipment of wheat to help feed millions of people in India who faced starvation. Canadians are serving in India under the World Health Organization, and in many other ways, to assist them with problems of health and in other fields.

I understand many representations have been made in respect of this case through the offices of our high commissioner to India, but to no avail. I am asking our Secretary of State for External Affairs immediately to bring to bear the full weight of the Canadian government in this matter. I ask that minister, through his parliamentary secretary here this evening, to make the strongest possible representations to the government of India to see that this clear case of injustice is righted.

The facts that I have were not only obtained from this man, but I have here everything documented by our consular division. It confirms everything that has been said by myself this evening and what was said by Mr.