

The Budget—Mr. Winch

things that are being done in his department that have brought this department to the position of being known as the most disreputable, despicable employer of labour in the Dominion of Canada.

Since the minister introduced the changes in the Post Office Act, naturally the changes have been made under his authority, but perhaps without his knowledge. But you are bringing them down to a position that is a shame in Canada. I am sorry, but I have just reached the end of what I had to say about the minister's department, and he is now here. While he is here, however, and although it is going to take up some of my time, I want to say again that I think it is terribly wrong that a directive should be issued—I have it here—that no overtime rates shall be paid unless a man has worked over 48 hours in the week. The employees are supposed to be on a 40-hour week basis. I have your directive here, Mr. Minister, and it is wrong. I feel it is wrong you should tell this house that no change in the night differential was under consideration, when there has been a change made in the night differential. The increase in wages does not cover the extra hours of work, so you are gaining a few cents on the night differential from those who work at night.

I want to continue now, Mr. Speaker, with one other phase of my remarks. If the minister is to be brought in, he should be brought in when I commence these remarks. I want to speak to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier).

Mr. Abbott: He is attending the dominion-provincial conference today.

Mr. Winch: I hope he is more successful in that than he has been with something else. I want to speak about what he had to say in this house under date of March 25, as it appears in *Hansard* at page 3319. He had this to say:

However, with reference to the transfer to Canadian National Telegraphs, I was unable to give any information to the house, because the departmental officers were in Montreal discussing the arrangements. These have now been completed and, in my opinion, they are as satisfactory as they were with the British Columbia Telephone Company. For that reason I am sure the house will be interested in knowing what are the terms of the transfer.

The Minister of Transport said that the terms of transfer of the employees of the government telegraph service were as good as those in the transfer of the telephone system. I am not expressing my own opinion, but when I was in Vancouver I was met by a delegation of those who were formerly the employees of the government. What did they have to say? They said that the employees

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of the government telegraph service, one of whom had thirty-one years of service, had received the dirtiest deal that they thought had ever been given to any employee of the government. I have read the statement of the Minister of Transport concerning what he maintains were the terms with reference to the transfer of the government service employees to the Canadian National Telegraphs. The employees say that all the information is incorrect. They say they met as employees with the Canadian National Telegraphs representatives, and that as a result they found their seniority lasted only a short time, and that inside of two months they would be reduced to what is known as a non-schedule basis, under which they would have no guarantee of wages, no seniority, and would not have the protection of any union agreement.

Eight employees in Vancouver refused to accept the proposal offered by Canadian National Telegraphs. One of these men, Mr. J. F. Christie, had been thirty-one years in the service of the federal government. Another, Mrs. Mighton, had been twenty-six years in that service; Mr. Oliver had been in the service seven years, and Mr. Coleman five years in the civil service and seven years in the army—and the time in the army has to be recognized.

The offer was such that all these employees had to refuse. They lost seniority; they lost superannuation rights under this non-schedule basis—and it must be kept in mind that only two, of all employees, came under the schedule basis. Under the non-schedule basis they would lose not only their standard of wage but also their seniority rights.

Something is greatly wrong in this connection, when we see those who have served the Dominion of Canada well being left completely stranded, as these employees were. And I would ask hon. members to keep in mind the fact that one of these men had been thirty-one years in the service of the federal government. It was wrong for the Minister of Transport to state in the House of Commons that the agreement with Canadian National Telegraphs was equal to that with B.C. Telephone Company. Everyone admits that B.C. Telephone was tops in its agreement and gave seniority and the same rates of pay—everything their own employees had. They even took three of the employees of the telegraph system into their employment.

The offer given these men by Canadian National Telegraphs was not the one the minister described to us, and these men quit the service. I say the federal government has a responsibility in the matter in having