

B.C. Telephone and Telegraph System

believe it is safe to say the minister shares our feeling in this respect is that he has from time to time given us assurances that this matter will be looked after, and that negotiations are proceeding with the purchasers to work out the details on this point.

I was therefore very much disturbed when on March 16, eight days ago, I received a telegram from the Vancouver branch of the Amalgamated Civil Servants of Canada reading as follows:

Statement made in house by minister transport recent date to effect efforts being made by C.N. Telegraphs and B.C. Telephone Company place as many employees possible but minister also stated he did not know what final disposition of staff would be. C.N.T.—

That is C.N. Telegraphs.

C.N.T. representatives now interviewing employees various offices state no recognition of past service government telegraphs being considered and employees seniority dates from day of entry into C.N.T.; also representatives know nothing what proposed for employees superannuation plan. Entire staff of government service definitely contend this intolerable situation and submit their welfare not at all safeguarded. Employees consider be grave breach faith if departmental communications sold before these questions namely past service recognition superannuation rights and salary clarified for well-being employees and announcement made to employees by department understand proposed date set for takeover April first.

When one receives a telegram which contains a very disturbing communication to the effect that the rights and the position of the employees are simply not being safeguarded, at least in so far as the C.N. Telegraphs are concerned, and one receives it just about two weeks before the actual date of transfer, then our concern is understandable. That concern is shared by my colleagues in my own party from British Columbia, and also hon. members from British Columbia in the C.C.F. and Social Credit party, and I am sure by hon. members in the Liberal party as well. We therefore wish to obtain assurances from the minister that these matters will be rectified and will be adjusted in so far as the Canadian National Telegraph Company is concerned, and that provision will be made by them to absorb the employees of the government system with due recognition for seniority rights and with proper arrangements to carry forward their pension and superannuation rights.

I understand from conversations with the minister that apparently the British Columbia Telephone Company has not found the same difficulty in making satisfactory arrangements, and I must confess that I have received no complaints from anyone on the telephone side of the government service. The complaints I have had with respect to the position of employees relates only to those

on the telegraph side. I should like to supplement what I have just read with some specific information with respect to one employee. I am not going to mention his name but a summary of his position will indicate just how unfair this could be to an employee or to all employees of this sort unless some satisfactory solution is worked out.

This is a man with 20 years' service with the government telegraph and telephone system, on the telegraph side. He has been offered what is called a swing-relief position at a salary of approximately \$260 per month. He points out that that position is not at all comparable with the position that he now occupies with the government service and that, with the bidding rights available to operators on the Canadian National Telegraphs, he is apt to stay in that position for a long time because he does not carry with him into the Canadian National Telegraphs any seniority, not even proportionate seniority based on the 20 years' faithful service that he has put in with the government service. Then he points out that suppose he should decide that the offer made by the Canadian National Telegraphs is not sufficiently attractive because it is not at all comparable with his present job and that he has no seniority in it, he would have to look around for other employment or else go on superannuation. Yet, by what I can only call, under these circumstances, a cruel stroke, he points out:

Under the new superannuation act effective January 1, 1954, it will be another seven years at least before I will be eligible for pension benefits.

He is now 43 years of age. He has had 20 years' service on the government system. By the new act, which became effective January 1 of this year, he has to wait until he is 50 before he can draw his own superannuation. He would therefore have seven years to wait. Then he says this:

An employee entering the Canadian National Telegraph service over 40 years of age is not eligible for pension benefits.

He is just three years over 40 years of age; he has seven years to wait before he can draw his own pension. Yet he cannot qualify under the Canadian National Telegraphs superannuation fund. So he has seven years to wait for his own superannuation to start, and no seniority and no pension rights in so far as the Canadian National Telegraphs are concerned.

He goes on to point out that he has paid into the superannuation fund for 20 consecutive years, has also paid up some back time, and that these contributions were paid under the provisions of the old act which provided that in the case of abolition of office—which