

The Budget—Mr. Winch

detained here by a very interesting conversation with a colleague of mine. I did not hear the remarks made by the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Mr. Harris: The hon. member for Vancouver East recited certain facts in connection with the Post Office Department. He said that on January 14 he made certain remarks and that on January 15 the Postmaster General answered him but that despite that answer certain action was taken at a later time which was contrary to what the minister had said. The hon. member used the words that the minister gave him the lie and I am asking that they be withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver East has heard the recapitulation of what he said. Am I to assume that the expression reported as having been used by him was in fact used by him? In the circumstances I am sure that he will know what course he should follow.

Mr. Winch: I would say, Mr. Speaker, with deference to you, that the information given this house does not represent what is now in effect in the Post Office Department.

Mr. Speaker: Does that mean that the hon. member withdraws the expression? As he knows, the formula for that is to say that he withdraws the offensive words.

Mr. Winch: I withdraw. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask that the minister who has just spoken should tell us what was the date of the order which changed the night differential?

Mr. Harris: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: May I ask the minister to allow me to interject a word here? We are not in committee. We are now proceeding to debate the budget, and the hon. member for Vancouver East is anxious to ask questions. Perhaps we ought to dispose of the motion now before the house and reach the committee stage where he can ask as many questions as he wishes, but not now.

Mr. Winch: I am saying it now so that they can be ready at the committee stage.

Mr. Abbott: Just making a constituency speech.

Mr. Winch: There is another point. I want to point out just what this government is doing through its Post Office Department. I am only going to speak about Vancouver because I know about Vancouver. This government is trying to pull a very fast one to save money. There is an agreement on wages so far as the Post Office Department is concerned, and what is being done? I am not blaming the minister. Perhaps he does not

know anything about it, but he ought to know. I am going to tell him right now what is being done. In order to cut the throats of those who should have these wages,—

Mr. McCann: That may go in British Columbia, but it does not go here.

Mr. Winch:—they hire what is called casual labour. I have heard of some of these casual labourers who have been working for months in the Vancouver post office department. Some of them have been there for years, and they are doing the same work as those who are on the permanent staff. There is this difference. If the Post Office Department calls them casual employees, they are paid 97 cents an hour. If these men were on the permanent staff they could reach a salary of \$280 per month.

I met a delegation of post office employees in Vancouver, and they said they call these men "permanent casual employees." The government gets away with paying them 97 cents an hour. I think it is time the government and this department got into a hole and pulled it in over them.

In Vancouver, sir, there was a chap doing electrical maintenance work. I did not see him, but the delegates from the post office association who came to see me told me about him. This man was receiving the prevailing union rate. Not long ago his position was abolished, and the civil service commission called for applications for this job. This man was told to make application and he would have a priority. He did make application, and he got the job, but at \$100 per month less than he had been receiving. Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious what is going on in this government. I do not think the same thing is happening in all departments; as a matter of fact, I am told it is not. It is in this Post Office Department.

I do not blame the minister. I do not think he knows what is occurring, but I think he has some rotten, putrid advisers. I think it is time something was done about them. I think the minister ought to make an investigation right now of what is occurring. Yes, you have increased wages. Yes, you have introduced the 40-hour five-day week. But what are you doing? You are bringing about the rottenest conditions between employer and employees in Canada, and that is being done by a department of the Dominion of Canada. I am very sorry the minister has not been here while I have been speaking. Since he is here now, I want to say again that I do not believe he knows what is happening in the Post Office Department. I do not think he knows of the policy or the