

To this question the right hon. Prime Minister replied as follows:

The matter need not necessarily remain in abeyance until the next session of parliament; I hope the commissioners will be appointed long before that time. I think I can say to my hon. friend that any delay that may be occasioned will not cause any loss to the civil servants in any particular.

I submit to the committee that at the least there has been the loss of the year's increase in pay. The Prime Minister must have been talking about delay, and he must have meant that the delay would not prejudice the matter because of the fact that any increase would be postponed from last year to some time in the future. That, I think, has not been taken into consideration, though the Prime Minister must admit what I have taken his words to convey; the service were greatly reassured as to the position in which they then found themselves as a result of what the Prime Minister said.

This amount of \$1,560 amounts to practically 60 cents an hour for an eight-hour day, in the neighbourhood of \$28.60 per week, as nearly as we can get it. The men who are digging ditches, or rolling barrels or doing other labouring work of the most ordinary kind for the city of Toronto, are getting exactly that wage to-day, with holidays thrown in and other considerations. The postal employees are men who have to possess certain qualifications exceeding those of the labourers I have mentioned; they have to pass an examination and they must be men of intelligence and education in order to carry out their duties efficiently. May I remind this committee that during the last few years there has been a great deal of important work added to the duties of the letter carriers; they sell stamps, collect c.o.d. orders, have to do with postal insurance, and other little jobs of that sort which carry some responsibility, in addition to their regular work. But, as I remember it, as a consequence of these additions to the duties of the postman there is no increase in his salary. The revision in 1924 was not an increase; it was simply a transfer of one part of his salary; instead of being labelled a bonus it was called a salary. That condition still exists and this salary was considered necessary in 1924, so I think we find ourselves clear on the point that there is no such general increase as that suggested by the Secretary of State.

My hon. friend has spoken of a matter in this connection which I think is of importance, and about which I asked a question last night. There is a loss on the carrying of newspapers, which I think has a direct bearing on the question under discussion. That

[Mr. Geary.]

loss is a direct charge, because there is no profit in that part of the postal business. The recent action of this House on reducing the postage on newspapers, has just been described as a direct bonus to the proprietors of certain newspapers, which I understand to be the larger ones because smaller ones have written me protesting against the reduction. I understand further that some of these newspapers canvass their district and give bonuses to obtain yearly subscriptions, and that in some cases you will find a newspaper offering a kewpie doll for a subscription. If that is the case, this government is assisting those newspapers by buying kewpie dolls for the purpose of increasing their circulations. That act has passed, but it has an effect on this question, because I think the government should say whether they are prepared to grant this request to the proprietors of newspapers, while they will not accede to the request of a working man who is not getting more than enough to maintain a decent standard of living. There is no use calling that \$18 a bonus; it has become a permanent part of the letter carrier's salary, but that is now lost to him as against the \$60 increase. There is not a general increase of \$120, and it does seem to me that the minister has not made out a good case to support his statement that an increase of \$240 has been made since 1924. I submit that a salary of \$1,560 would be a reasonable salary for these men, and I would again remind the committee that in 1924 the department recommended that that salary be paid. So I do press very strongly the claims of these men to be treated adequately and fairly; it is not an extravagant amount, and it seems to me the people of this country would be well satisfied to see these men receive a wage commensurate with the cost of living and with the conditions under which men employed by this government should live.

Mr. EVANS: May I ask the Secretary of State if he would make a statement regarding the civil servants employed by the Soldier Settlement Board? Are they to remain in the temporary class, or will they be considered permanent, and is it intended that they should share in this increase and in the superannuation?

Mr. FORKE: I may say that that matter is at present being considered by the government.

Mr. ROSS (Kingston): May I ask the Postmaster General one question? He has promised to deal with two classes in regard to which there is some dispute. There is a third class that deserve consideration. I refer