

Post Office

the people of Canada are worried about inflation and that therefore anybody who is accused of being responsible for it must be responsible. So the government, as I say, is relying on a certain amount of public feeling against the postal workers, and hoping that this will come to the point where the postal workers will feel that they must give in. In the meantime, the present situation, essentially, is that no honest bargaining is taking place and that meetings are held under the shadow of the guidelines. That is not collective bargaining; that is not bargaining in good faith.

We shall not see bargaining in good faith until the government says that the guidelines are not the final factor and that, "We are here to sit across the table from the postal workers to deal with the issues on their merits and come to a conclusion." My colleague for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) has already said that the guidelines have been blown to bits by many agreements which have been made. I believe he quoted figures from government sources showing that hourly wages paid to postal workers are below the average hourly wages that workers involved in industry might expect. I believe the postal workers have a case. Instead of taking time to go into that case this afternoon, I shall stay with this point: the bargaining that is taking place is not honest bargaining. It is not honest, good faith collective bargaining at all.

● (6:10 p.m.)

One way this problem could be settled would be that the next time the government people meet with the Council of Postal Unions they could say, "All right, we are starting afresh. We have called each other names. We have had these rotational strikes. We have had this for a long time. We are now prepared to deal with this issue on its merits. Put your case before us. Give us the statistics. We will deal with the matter on its merits." If out of that some reasonable proposal can be made, I believe that the matter will be settled in a reasonable time.

I wish to say a few words regarding the matter of job security. After all, the issues that separate the parties are pretty well down to two, wages and job security. I have tried to listen to and to read all that has been said or written about it. I cannot understand why the government says, through the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans), that it is expected there will be more jobs in the Post Office in four or five years than at the present time and yet is unwilling to put a job security

clause into the contract. If it was the other way and the government was afraid it was going to have to reduce the number of jobs, we could understand the position. This position is completely beyond understanding. I think it is fair on the part of the workers to ask for job security. On the other side of the coin, there is no reason for the position the government has taken.

It is Friday afternoon. It is getting late. Many members want to speak. There is no reason why everyone must speak his full time. I am going to take my seat because I want my intervention in this debate to be one that zeroed in on one point. We do not need the kind of talk we have had from the Postmaster General, taking us all over the lot. What is needed is to face the important issue, getting the strike settled. The only way the strike can be settled is by an honest dose of collective bargaining. We will not get that as long as it is done under the shadow of the present guidelines policy, and I urge an immediate commencement of bargaining that is really in good faith.

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member who has just spoken has indicated, there might be some merit in trying to put the facts, as well as some of the myths, regarding this particular situation into proper perspective. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has suggested that, as he sees it, there is a distinct lack of honesty in the process of collective bargaining which is now going on. I wish to address myself to that question. Perhaps the hon. member has been misled or does not understand the actual steps that have been taken and the offers which have been made. The suggestion that the collective bargaining process in this particular instance is being rendered nugatory as a consequence of guidelines proposed by Dr. Young, Chairman of the Prices and Incomes Commission and supported by the government, is really without foundation.

Perhaps it is important for hon. members to know that there is now, and has been since early June, an offer made by the employer, in this case the government, before the Council of Postal Unions that will raise the rate of pay for letter carriers from the current figure of \$2.99 an hour to the equivalent of \$3.19 per hour, retroactive to October 1, 1969 with a further raise to \$3.25 an hour as of June 1, this month, and a further raise to \$3.40 per hour as of April 1, 1971. That offer is now on the table.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]