

Postal Rates

Board, we all understand that is one of the basic questions of contention. As I say, I have put to my friends in the union the short contract. I hope this will be a way of resolving the serious difficulties that have occurred in the past.

I assure the hon. member I am acutely aware of the problems that any negotiating team has under the present structure when it does not know whether what it says is a final offer is really a final offer at all. Always there is the shadow of Treasury Board behind the bargaining table.

Mr. Rodriguez: I thank the minister for that precise answer. My next question relates to noise levels at Gateway in Toronto and other major terminals. Under the Public Service Staff Relations Act there is no part IV as there is in the Canada Labour Code. The minister is well aware of that because he was labour critic when he was in opposition. Has this very serious problem been brought to his attention? I know the minister is concerned about occupational health and safety in the work place. Will something be done with regard to studying very quickly what can be done to alleviate the noise levels?

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Chairman, I have to apologize to the hon. member. I cannot give a detailed answer. May I take the hon. member's question and return to him perhaps tomorrow or in the next few days with an adequate answer.

Mr. Rodriguez: My next question deals with the trial of Jean-Claude Parrot. After having been found guilty and sentenced, he is appealing the sentence. I spoke with the minister informally. Other leaders were also charged with having breached the Criminal Code. Those charges can be dropped by the Crown if it so desires.

I say to the minister in all seriousness that those responsible for the security of this nation who did such serious things as burning down barns and stealing were not exposed to that kind of sentencing. In the minister's desire for a more harmonious relationship between the department and those who work for it, will he assure us he will look into the possibility of dropping charges against those who have not yet come to court?

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Chairman, as Postmaster General I have not felt it my place to interfere with charges that are before the courts. That entire matter is one for the Department of Justice. The hon. member realizes that, with regard to Mr. Parrot's case, the sentence is under appeal. I understand the judges of the Court of Appeal have reserved and are considering this case. I do not want to say anything in this House that may be deemed to be interference in one way or the other with their deliberations.

Mr. Rodriguez: My next question is with regard to something the minister is concerned about, the practice in the past. There is documented evidence of this. Certain middle management tend to run around the ends of the collective agreement, particularly the very contentious technological change clause. Will the minister assure us that a memorandum will go to all levels of management in the Post Office instructing them to

[Mr. Fraser.]

observe the collective agreement and not try to run around the ends of it, even though they may think it is in the best interests of the Post Office.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Chairman, I want to assure all hon. members that I believe collective agreements should be honoured. That applies equally to the union that enters into the agreement and the management side that enters into the agreement. My answer has to be that I will do everything I can to ensure that collective agreements that are made will be honoured.

Mr. Rodriguez: The other question I have is with regard to grievances that are still pending. The history of these grievances shows that in many, many instances the cases were lost by management at all three stages, after which management appealed for adjudication. History has shown that on the eve of adjudication—and we have examples which I can provide—the Post Office withdraws its appeal for adjudication. The minister tells us that he will be meeting the leadership of one of the unions. Would he take a first step by seeing that these cases which the Post Office had lost at all three stages and appealed to adjudication, especially where the decision of an adjudicator had been given in a previous instance, will not be left hanging fire until the eve of an adjudication, that they will be dropped by the Post Office?

● (1720)

Mr. Fraser: As I told the hon. member, I have already met with representatives of one of the unions on this point and we shall be meeting again. I will take the hon. member's representations into account—they are similar to representations I have heard from union officials. This is certainly something I shall be looking into.

Mr. Rodriguez: My last question deals with superannuation delays. Many postal employees have decided to take their pensions and have applied for superannuation. In some cases they find delays are running in excess of six months. Is the minister prepared to look into this problem and try to alleviate it—to speed up payments—in whatever way necessary?

Mr. Fraser: I can give the hon. member the assurance that I will look into the matter immediately. I am not sure, though, that any delay necessarily is the fault of the Post Office.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Chairman, I should like give the minister an opportunity to make a comment about an area of the Post Office which has traditionally not experienced much difficulty in management-labour relations, and that is the service dispensed by the Post Office in rural areas and the incredible anomalies and discrepancies which exist in the type of service the Post Office dispenses in rural communities by comparison with the type of service dispensed in the cities. For example a person living in the concrete jungle expects a postman to come to the door every day and complain if he does not arrive or if he is five minutes late.

I should like to draw a comparison with the service provided to a person living in mid-Canada or northern Canada in a small community where temperatures go to 40 below. These people have to start their automobiles to drive to the post