

Postal Service Policies

should have it, whatever the cost may be. It is imperative, not only for the Post Office workers but for the population as a whole.

The people want good services; they also want improved services, and at the best possible price. They do not want to pay twice what they are worth.

While reading a bulletin published by the Treasury Board and giving the hourly rates paid to postal employees, I realized that letter carriers were earning \$3.25 per hour, and postal employees an average of \$3.32 per hour, and postal clerks \$3.37. The average hourly salary of skilled and unskilled workers in the manufacturing industries of Canada is \$2.93.

It is obvious that they cannot be granted \$5 per hour, when the population as a whole earns \$2.93 or \$2.95. Everybody understands that. However, a strike will not solve the problem.

If it is proved to me that a strike has previously settled the problems of the workers in the world, I will then seriously consider the possibility of recommending strikes. I have always seen this paradox: the end of one strike is always the beginning of the next one. One is never satisfied, and that cannot be satisfactory either.

The price of goods increases at a faster rate than salaries. Even if the worker earns \$3 per hour, the manufacturer will take his profit off the increase in salary. If he takes a profit of 10, 15 or 20 per cent, a salary increase of \$1 can result in a price increase of \$1.15, \$1.20. Then the problem has not been solved, but the situation has perhaps helped increase inflation, because prices increase and the purchasing power does not increase correspondingly.

This is why we in the Ralliement Cr ditiste advocate a myth and recommend the distribution of a national dividend in order to boost the consumer's purchasing power. This would not affect the cost of goods or increase prices, but it would increase the purchasing power. Some say that if there is more purchasing power, prices will go up. That is not true. Prices increase when salaries are increased. That is clear!

However, if a dividend were paid directly to the consumer by a national credit board, it would not affect the cost of goods or services. Therefore, prices remain stable. With an increasing purchasing power, goods can be sold so that industries resume normal opera-

tions and create new jobs. This way, we fight unemployment and we bring real economic stability to the Canadian people.

I urge the Postmaster General and Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans) to examine this solution and to stop calling it a myth. Let him study it since he has no alternative to suggest.

[English]

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General and Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, if there are very many more motions of non-confidence like this, and they seem to come fairly regularly, I might even begin to believe some of them myself.

Before stating in a general fashion the position of the Post Office, I should like to take up some points that have been raised by the previous speakers. I regret very much that the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) is not present in the House, because there are a number of his statements that I wish to qualify. Some matters I shall interpret rather differently than he did.

• (2:40 p.m.)

The criticisms remain the same and have not changed, although there are some improvements in the oratory. The criticism that we have introduced a five-day week in the Post Office and that this has resulted, as it certainly has, in a physical diminution in the service we provide, does not take into account the fact that the country itself has changed. Eighty per cent of what the Post Office does it does for the business community of Canada, and the business community of Canada works a five-day week. I fail to see the desirability of wasting the money of the taxpayers of Canada by providing services and knocking on doors of firms when there are no people there.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North said that I introduced another measure for the purpose of saving money, called single mail processing, and said that we were refusing to allow the letter carriers to return for lunch. This is not true, and reflects a misunderstanding on his part of exactly what single mail processing is all about. What single mail processing avoided was an unnecessary, or partial or minimal additional mail processing for very small numbers of items carried on a letter carrier's route that he would undertake after he had returned and finished his lunch.