

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JOHN E. FOGARTY, 2nd DISTRICT, RHODE ISLAND,
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 8, 1954, RELATIVE TO
POSTAL EMPLOYEES' PAY RAISE.

Mr. Speaker.

We have been hearing a great deal about morale in the postal service. Numerous studies are being conducted by both Houses of Congress, by Departments and agencies, to determine a proper program to bring about improved morale.

It seems to me that the answer to the problem is very simple indeed. There are two ills that have plagued the postal service. I do not believe it is necessary for the Congress or any committee of Congress to conduct any lengthy involved study to determine what these ills are and what is the proper remedy to correct these ills.

We simply have to pass legislation repealing the restrictions placed upon the postal service by the Whitten Amendment, and pass legislation providing the postal employees with a decent American wage.

According to the last published report of the Postmaster General, there were 168,000 part-time employees, compared to 355,000 full-time employees. Obviously, this condition requires correction, and correction cannot be had until the restrictions of the Whitten Amendment are repealed.

The Post Office Department is having a great deal of difficulty convincing men to accept employment. What chance do you have to convince a prospective employee to come to work for Uncle Sam when he can walk down the street and secure a position paying 20 or 25 cents more per hour. This is particularly true when the employing officer in the postal service cannot offer the man a permanent job and is compelled to offer him an entrance salary far below what he can secure in most industries.

In 1951 when we last adjusted postal salaries, the entrance pay in the post office was two cents above the average hourly earnings in factories. Today, the average hourly earnings in factories is 18 cents above postal pay. In the large cities, postmasters are finding it extremely difficult to recruit personnel. Hundreds of people take an examination for entrance in the postal service, which is evidence of the

fact that they have the desire to work for Uncle Sam, but when they are called to report for duty, it has been the experience in many large cities that well over 50 per cent of these men refused to accept the position. They are offered a starting salary of \$62.88 a week. In 1953, the take-home pay out of this salary of a man with three dependents was only \$54.52. Effective January 1, 1954, there was a reduction in withholding tax, which added the munificent sum of 50 cents to the take-home pay of this employee, so now in this period of extremely high prices, the postal employee with three dependents is expected to maintain an American standard of living with a weekly income of \$55.02. It simply cannot be done.

In talking with many of my friends in the postal service in Rhode Island, I find that a good number of them have been forced to take outside jobs in order to make ends meet. Others tell me that their wives have had to seek work outside the home in order to supplement the family's income.

Can we in the Congress permit such conditions to continue?

Can we say that we are meeting our responsibility to Federal employees when we take no action to remedy the injustice with which they are presently faced? In my opinion, neither further study nor further talk constitutes a remedy. What the situation demands is a substantial pay increase now - not months in the future.

I am happy to learn that the ~~Post Office~~ and Civil Service Committee has scheduled hearings on this important legislation commencing February 8. I wish to urge my colleagues on that Committee to speed up these hearings so that we can pass legislation in the House of Representatives during the month of February and so that the postal employees will be given the increase that they so sorely need promptly in this session. In my opinion, this is an emergency situation and we should waste no time in correcting it.