

MEMO FOR CONGRESSMAN JOHN E. FOGARTY, RHODE ISLAND, FOR
ADDRESS AT RHODE ISLAND FEDERATION OF POST OFFICE CLERKS
CONVENTION, WEST WARWICK, R. I., JUNE 5, 1955.

The subject of a decent and adequate postal wage is one that has occupied not only your own thoughts but those of your friends in Congress as well. My own background as a trades unionist as well as my knowledge of your problems, assure my support of your efforts from the very beginning. I am happy to add that my views are shared by the entire Rhode Island delegation. Aime Forand and I in the House, as well as Senators Green and Pastore, favored the bills which would have given you a 10% increase without reclassification. As a matter of fact, Senator Pastore was one of the Senate sponsors of such a measure.

Like yourself and other postal employees, none of us favor the reclassification proposals advanced by the Postmaster General. We believe that those proposals as they were originally advanced would have resulted in a wholesale downgrading of the positions of postal employees. As you know, the Senate passed the bill S. 1 in a form agreeable to you and those you represent. Unfortunately, under the rules of the House of Representatives I was not given an opportunity to vote for that bill. The House ultimately passed a compromise bill

which would have provided increases averaging about \$350 a year for post office clerks with a modified reclassification proposal.

As you know, that measure went to the White House and was vetoed by the President.

In his veto message, President Eisenhower stated that the bill was discriminatory and that the cost - 180 million dollars a year - was "substantially greater than is necessary to adjust postal salaries to a fair level...." Insofar as discrimination goes, I think the President put the shoe on the wrong foot. It seems to me that the bill he vetoed, which provided increases ranging from 7 to something less than 9% for the vast majority of employees, and up to 50% or more for postmasters and supervisors, discriminated in favor of the higher brass and I am confident that was not what the President was worried about.

His position on cost seems to me to have been extremely unreasonable, particularly when it is realized that postal workers have not had an increase since 1951, while the employees of private industry have had two or more increases in the same period. Since 1950 the wages of postal employees advanced 20¢ a hour while the wages of

employees of General Motors advanced 44¢ an hour. In the same period when postal employees' wages were static, the employees of General Motors received increases amounting to 22¢ per hour as a result of their increased productivity. In the case of postal employees, productivity increased approximately 28% during this period with no increases in wages. The present administration prides itself on being a business administration but it seems to me they would do well to adopt the practices of business when dealing with other employees.

Last Wednesday the Senate, by a vote of 78 to 0, passed another postal pay bill which provides for a 6% increase and is estimated to average about 8% of the total postal pay roll. On Thursday, the House Committee approved that bill and in all probability that bill will pass the House sometime during the coming week and will go to the White House. I personally don't think that bill does justice to postal employees. Nevertheless, it seems to be about the only kind of a bill that can be enacted due to the opposition of the administration. Your friends in the Congress will have to vote for it in order to assure you at least some small measure of justice.

In my judgment, this legislation will be enacted in the course of the next few days.

The position of your National Officers - President Leo E. George and your Legislative Director Roy Hallbeck - has consistently been in opposition to the reclassification proposals of the Post Office Department. Those of us who have worked with them have done everything we could in an effort to assure a decent salary increase and I can assure you that our efforts in that direction will not end with the passage of the bill now before the Congress. Legislation is never perfect and no bill is written for eternity. I am confident that there are going to be other and better salary bills enacted in the future and you can depend upon my personal support, as well as the support of all members of the Rhode Island delegation.

I want to mention one other subject that should be of supreme importance to all postal and federal employees. Congressman George Rhodes of Pennsylvania and a number of other Congressmen and Senators, has introduced a bill that would require the federal government to give statutory recognition to employee organizations.

It seems to me that the events of the last two years have demonstrated beyond all doubt the necessity for such legislation. It is inconceivable that a government which requires private industry to recognize and deal with the employees of private industry should do anything less in the case of the employees of that government. I am confident that if the Rhodes bill (H. R. 697) had been enacted before the salary question arose, a much happier solution would have been found. The day has long since passed when any administrator can make unilateral decisions without consultation with the employees affected and expect those decisions to receive support. I believe that the federal government ought to set an example to private industry in its dealings with employees and I shall certainly support this type of legislation.