

to retire and they all have their eyes on that job. When we move somebody else in from another office, it creates some problems.

As far as morale is concerned, we have done many, many things in the past 7 years to improve the morale, not the least of which is congressional approval of comparability of pay scales with private industry.

We have set up one of the largest or the largest of labor-management programs. We have some 600,000 employees who are covered by union contracts. In 1963 we had the largest labor-management election ever held, around 385,000 votes, all cast by mail. We now have 24,500 individual bargaining units. We have signed our fourth national agreement with them. It covers all kinds of things that should improve morale, such as the manner in which employees will select prime vacation time and many matters concerning working conditions.

We have a presidentially appointed board which just concluded a study on motivation.

But, when you do have such a large group of people, all at level 5, which is the level now, it is very difficult to make everybody happy. It is also difficult to get people, let's say college students who want to be a supervisor shortly, since they get bogged down in the promotion practice which gives, and I think necessarily so, some consideration to seniority.

Mr. REID. I have long supported the principle of comparability and I appreciate the various steps you have taken and are taking.

Am I correct that there is now a relatively serious morale problem among the carriers, for example, particularly in the East—

Mr. BELEN. You have a problem when you have—

Mr. REID. Versus comparable areas of potential employment? I have always thought the postal service was one of the most important in the sense that it was the service that was directly in touch most frequently with the American people, and the carriers are ambassadors, if you will.

But I increasingly hear comments that disturb me, because many are not now as anxious to become a carrier as they used to be.

Mr. BELEN. The problem exists where there is a national pay scale as against a regional pay scale, which is bound to be not quite as comparable, let's say, in a high pay area as it would be in a lower pay area. The jobs would become much more desirable in a small community.

Mr. REID. Would you favor cost of living differentials to meet that?

Mr. BELEN. I think that might be rather difficult to administer.

Mr. REID. Is there a morale problem among the clerks and carriers in certain parts of the country?

Mr. BELEN. People say there is. As I drive to the office sometimes in the winter with snow all over the Northeast I realize that the postal worker is as handicapped by the weather as a farmer. I find in the postal business that just putting chains on our trucks costs a lot of money—

Mr. REID. We used to in the newspaper business, too.

Mr. BELEN. When I realize there are tens of thousands of carriers going out and delivering that mail, I think we have the greatest morale of any organization.

Mr. REID. Perhaps I haven't been clear. I think the morale is magnificent among the carriers in the main. But what the older men are