

you can tender again, and that is the only remedy I have for you. That is, perhaps, safeguarding the public, but it is poor consolation for the man who has undertaken the contract and who has entered into obligations and involved others in obligations in order to see that he carries out his contract. I think, Sir, the people of Canada are quite willing that proper methods should be used by the Post Office Department to see that no man shall lose money by reason of the fact that prices have gone up to the extent they have, and that contracts were made at a time when these high prices did not exist. The people generally are unwilling that any one man or one class of men should suffer all the loss. Proper inquiry should be made into these things, and such advances made on the contracts during the period they have still to run as would enable the contractor to make a fair profit upon his investment. The hon. member for Frontenac has particularly pointed out the case of men carrying the parcel post. I know of scores of such cases in my part of the country where men who were doing the work with one horse conveniently and well have had to use two horses; instead of one man handling the mails, two men were required just at the same small price that was being paid when one man and one horse did the work. Though representations have not been coming in to the present acting minister so much as to the ministers who preceded him, there has been continuous knocking at the door of the Post Office Department for some fair consideration. I submit to the minister, who is an ex-judge and a lawyer, and therefore capable of judging this thing, that all contracts should be taken up in the light of present conditions compared with the conditions existing at the time the contract was made and the tenders called for. In thousands of cases, tenders were called for and contracts entered into when the parcel post was not in existence, and by reason of the parcel post a new duty and burden has been cast upon the contractor that was not in contemplation by either party at the time the contract was made. That certainly is a subject for consideration and for readjustment. It has been the law and the custom that if you add a few miles to the route of a mail carrier there is a readjustment and he gets a pro rata advance. If it is well known that for twenty years a certain quantity of mail was carried along a certain route by one horse, and if it turned out that, by a change in the law, articles not hitherto carried in the mail are added,

[Mr. McKenzie.]

by which the weight is raised from 100 pounds to 300 pounds, I submit that that is a tangible increase in the responsibility cast upon the mail carrier, and that the department should give cognizance to that and compensate the carrier accordingly. The resolution moved by the hon. member for Peterborough is a very timely one, and it is proper that this question should in the fullest and most open way be brought to the notice of the House. If the minister should come to the conclusion that the only thing he can do is to cancel the contracts and call for tenders, I submit to his consideration the question of men who have bought horses and carriages and what equipment was necessary for the carrying of the mail, and which they now have on their hands, and suggest that the taking over of this plant should receive his serious consideration.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Shelburne and Queens: Though this may seem to be only a minor matter, it is really a matter of the utmost importance throughout our country, and I am glad that the hon. member for Peterborough has drawn the attention of the House to it. I sympathize very heartily with the object he has in view, but my only difficulty is whether or not the remedy he is proposing is a safe one. It is a fact that this class of service is performed for the people of Canada generally at a very low rate. I do not know why it is that the fascination of a Government dollar is so strong, but the fact is there seems to be so much competition for it that in very many instances under the best conditions the man who gets the mail carrying contract loses money on it. I have known many men who in taking these contracts have ruined themselves because they made their tender too low. But I think the suggestion that the Postmaster General should have the power to revise these contracts in individual cases is a rather dangerous one. I am not surprised that the hon. Minister of Justice shrinks from it. If he has the duty of saying whether a certain contractor should receive an advance and another not, he will have a disagreeable duty, and I am sure that all the members of the House would be unwilling that any postmaster general should have such discretion as to make a distinction between a contractor whose price he would increase and one whose price he would not increase. It would be a very uncomfortable thing for the Postmaster General; it would be a very embarrassing situation indeed.