

Mr. GORDON: That much?

Mr. SANDERSON: I think on the average it would be at least fifty per cent. The present Minister of Justice, who has just left his seat, said at that time: Why did the late King government not raise the price to the rural mail carriers? The price at that time was on a fair basis, but purely for political purposes the opposition of that day under the leadership of the right hon. gentleman who is now Prime Minister and of the hon. gentleman who is now Minister of Justice, advocated higher rates and promised—and all their followers cheered and banged their desks—that when they came into power they would abolish the contract system altogether and put the rural mail contractors on a basis of \$70 per mile per annum.

Mr. McGIBBON: They are on a basis now of so much per mile.

Mr. SANDERSON: They are not; they are on a tender.

Mr. McGIBBON: Yes, but if the tender exceeds the price of so much per mile, they are not paid it.

Mr. MERCIER (St. Henri): What you give with one hand you withdraw with the other.

Mr. SANDERSON: I was wrong about the date of the speech of the present Minister of Justice. I said that it was in 1930, but apparently it was in April, 1929. The Conservative party were just beginning then to make their promises of what they were going to do if they got into power in 1930. The Minister of Justice made his speech on April 16, 1929, as reported at page 1612 of Hansard of that year. I shall not attempt to read the whole speech, but I shall read a portion of it.

Mr. ARTHURS: I rise to a point of order. I have listened very attentively to this debate, and I would submit that it is entirely out of order, the item before the committee being "fair wages and inspection" under the Fair Wages Act. Under that act the government has control only of wages on public works—

Mr. CASGRAIN: This is public works.

Mr. ARTHURS:—not on post offices or anything of that kind. That is controlled by the Post Office Department.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): We are discussing the whole principle of fair wages.

The CHAIRMAN: I think it still comes under the rule.

Mr. SANDERSON: I mentioned a moment or two ago that the speech of the Minister of Justice was printed and sent out to all the rural mail carriers. That was not all that was done at that time. A special letter, under the signature, I think, of the then chief organizer of the Conservative party, went out to the rural mail carriers of this country.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): On blue paper.

Mr. SANDERSON: Yes, on blue paper. This letter went on to say that the Conservative party were grieved and sorry that the rural mail carriers of this country were working for starvation wages, but that if they would see to it that there was a change in government, that is, if they would vote against the Liberal party, the Conservatives pledged their solemn promise that when they got back to power one of the first things they would do would be to raise the pay of rural mail carriers and it would be on a basis of \$70 per mile per annum. I am sorry the Minister of Justice is not in his seat because I want to read just a portion of the speech which he delivered in the house on April 16, 1929, when the house was in supply and discussing rural mail contracts. This is what he said:

The system which was adopted in the first instance in regard to these rural mail routes was one based on tender and contract. Certain routes were publicly advertised, tenders were called, and as a rule a fairly large number of tenderers responded to the advertisement in the hope of securing occupation as mail carriers in the rural parts of Canada. I suppose that lack of experience had something to do with the unsatisfactory conditions which attended the first tenders and the first contracts, but as time has gone on, conditions instead of improving have gradually become worse until to-day we find a system established throughout practically the whole length and breadth of this country under which certain men who are practically employees of this government—

And I want the Minister of Labour to listen to this particularly.

—and of this country, for the purpose of carrying His Majesty's mails, are not receiving an adequate return for the services they perform. Indeed, so inadequate is the return to our rural mail couriers that the matter has become nothing less than a public scandal. Year after year this matter has been brought to the attention of this government and of the present Postmaster General during the discussion of the post office estimates. Year after year the rural letter carriers have requested that their claims be considered and that they be treated on some fairer basis and on some higher standard than anything they have enjoyed hitherto.