

grew up with them, and offshoots were made to the other line, but no definite and extensive changes have been made up to date. If this can be done within the limits of our appropriation I shall be favourable to it.

Mr. SHAW: In common, I presume, with many other members, applications have been forwarded to me for the establishment of rural mail routes that would appear to be paying routes and would furnish splendid accommodation to a great number of farming communities, but apparently this accommodation cannot be granted. What is the policy of the department, and what change is proposed in the immediate future?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I had nothing to do with the preparation of these estimates. Since I have been Acting Postmaster General nearly every member of this House has come to me and pointed out that it would be very desirable to extend the rural mail service in his constituency. But there is no item in the estimates for such extension. The Deputy Postmaster General informs me that he is anxious to get the postal business on a paying basis before he extends the rural service. Speaking purely personally, I sometimes wonder whether or not at the stage of our development it was wise to commence this service. Undoubtedly it is a great convenience to rural communities, but it is pretty expensive, although the delivery men are doing the work at very small cost. Under the mileage system in the United States the service is costing just double what it costs us under our contract system.

Mr. LAPIERRE: Until this government remedies the abuses of the previous government and gives opportunity to those who were debarred because of their political faith from the rural mail service to which they have always been entitled, we will have this trouble.

Mr. WOODS: The minister has referred to the cost of the rural mail service. I have had no complaints from our rural mail carriers in regard to the tender system, although they are serving us faithfully at very low remuneration; what they do complain of, and very strongly, is the absence of holidays.

Mr. LAPIERRE: Were they not aware of those conditions when they tendered for their contracts?

Mr. WOODS: That may be true. But there would be no complaint from the boxholders in regard to the mail carriers getting their holidays. If there is any possibility of

[Mr. C. A. Stewart.]

giving these men the allotted holidays it would be a great relief for them and it would be an assistance in the matter of getting tenders for contracts in the future.

Mr. SPENCER: I realize the extra cost involved to the country in putting these rural mail delivery routes through. But where the mail carriers cover a distance of twelve to twenty miles and there is no rural delivery it is pretty hard on the people of the district to have to travel six to ten miles to the post office for their mail. How many of these rural mail delivery routes have been asked for and are at present in abeyance?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): About 125.

Mr. SPENCER: Is there much difference between the cost of the services of the ordinary mail carrier who does not deliver mail into the boxes and the cost of having say the same man deliver mail into the boxes on the same route?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I am afraid I cannot answer that question. In all probability the cost would not be more than 25 to 30 per cent more. These tenders fluctuate greatly. In some localities the men will do the work for almost nothing while in others they ask a pretty fair price. Altogether it works out at about \$45 a mile. The association represented to me some time ago that they were not pressing their request at this time for the \$70 a mile to put them on a parity with the United States but that they would press for the holidays. They have in mind, of course, a higher price for their services. I promised to bring their representations to the attention of the Postmaster General upon his return.

Mr. ELLIOTT (Waterloo): The hon. member (Mr. Woods) pointed out that the mail carriers were not receiving any holiday. To give you an illustration of how the department treats the men in this respect I wish to read a letter which was sent to me by a mail carrier in my constituency. This man got the permission of every boxholder on his route to take Christmas Day off. He took it, and on January 23 he received the following letter:

Dear Sir,—This is to advise you that the department has authorized a pro rata reduction for the trip missed by you on December 25, which amount will be deducted from your next cheque.

Yours very truly,

D. J. McLEAN.

That is rather harsh treatment when everyone on that route was satisfied that the man should have the holiday.