

control of the expenditure of several hundreds of thousands of dollars based on such evidence as may be brought before him and his officials, is a course against which I protest. It is carrying into the days of peace the type of thing we objected to during the war. This is carrying into the days of peace the type of thing we objected to during the period of the war, namely placing the minister in a position of supremacy in the expenditure of money, regardless of contracts, regardless of parliament, and without control. I think the minister should give consideration to extending the provisions of this resolution to cover all tenderers, so that they will all be treated alike, or, in any event, to doing away with this part of the provision. I should like to hear the Postmaster General, with his penchant for criticism, on this side of the house if anyone of us should ask for power to expend three or four hundred thousand dollars, uncontrolled by parliament. It is a dangerous principle and one which I am sure on consideration he will realize places too great power in the hands of any minister.

With everything the hon. member for Peel has said I am in complete agreement. The hon. member for Durham, who is not here today, has done much to bring before this house and the country the needs of the carriers. Surely in 1947 a minister is not going to ask for *carte blanche* in the expenditure of public money. Human nature being what it is, political considerations must inevitably enter into any evidence that may be brought before him; and I for one intend to protest against that portion of the resolution.

Mr. MARQUIS: I want to add just a few words to the discussion on this resolution, because in my constituency I have many couriers who are carrying mail at very low rates. Some of them are carrying mail at the rate of \$30 per mile per year, which I think is very low. After listening to the arguments advanced by those who have spoken this afternoon, we may conclude that everyone admits that the principle involved in the present resolution is just and fair. The only objection raised by hon. members of the opposition is that the justice offered is not sufficiently complete. It seldom happens that members of the opposition raise an objection of that kind.

The principle involved in this resolution is to adjust the bonuses and terms of payment under mail contracts. During the war many couriers asked for and were given bonuses amounting to ten per cent, fifteen per cent, twenty per cent. Others did not apply at all. Some applied and received five per cent. It

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

seems only just that today we should give to those who were given nothing, or very little, a bonus equivalent to that which was given those who received twenty-five per cent or twenty per cent.

I suggest that in the near future we should set a minimum rate to be paid these mail couriers. At the present time tenders are called for, and some people think that if they get a contract from the government they will live easily, with plenty of money. But when they send in a tender for a contract on the basis of \$20 a mile I think it is unsound, unfair and impracticable, and it is impossible for those contractors to carry the mail and render the service they should.

For the time being, however, we have to take care of a situation which seems to me inappropriate and unjust. We have before us a resolution which takes care of that situation, and I do not see why we should object, because the principle seems to be supported by every hon. member in the house. As the hon. member for Montmagny-L'Islet said a few moments ago, we have to provide for different conditions in different parts of this great country; conditions of weather, conditions of distance, conditions of roads and so on. So it is impossible to fix an average rate for every contract, but perhaps it would be possible to fix a minimum rate and not accept any tender below perhaps \$35 or \$40 a mile. In this particular case, however, we are not attempting to provide for a situation that may arise in future; we have to take care of the present situation, and the only thing mentioned in the resolution is that we should make an adjustment in connection with the mail couriers whose prices are too low but who for five or six or seven years have rendered service to their country without receiving reasonable payment. As I said a few moments ago, this minimum rate should be allowed for the less costly routes, and those who have routes of the same kind in the same area should be paid equal rates.

In conclusion, I ask hon. members to look at the principle of the resolution and accept it. If, when the bill is brought in, some amendment must be made, perhaps all hon. members may concur in such amendment; but for the moment everyone seems to agree that the principle is just, and if the principle is just let us accept it.

Mr. WHITE (Middlesex East): I wish to add just a word to what has been said by hon. members regarding the low pay these mail couriers have received. On August 6, 1946, I drew this matter to the attention of the Postmaster General. From time to time I have