

the various Cabinet ministers for public works, harbour improvements, post offices and one thing and another. About the only thing the Government can do is to give an effective and efficient mail service.

I repeat what I have said on former occasions that this is not a question of whether there is a surplus or a deficit in the Post Office Department. If there is any department of the Government where there is a justification for having a deficit it is the Post Office Department because every cent of revenue comes out of the pockets of the people and it should go back to them in the form of an efficient service. The people of the country will find no fault with this or any other Government if there is a deficit in the Post Office Department so long as the Government gives the people in country districts an efficient and effective service. I hope this matter will not be simply passed over as something of little importance but that it will receive the attention that it merits. I hope that not only will rural mail carriers get more pay but that country postmasters and postmistresses will also be more fairly remunerated.

They are entitled to more pay than they get at the present time. The hon. member for Rouville says that the Government is safeguarded by competition, that if these routes are put up to tender there will always be lots of persons to tender for them. Of course, my hon. friend is speaking for that part of the country with which he is best acquainted—his own part of the country. That may be true in his part of the country but I want to assure him and you, Mr. Speaker, that while his statement may have applied, not only to his own part of the country but to the Dominion in general four or five years ago, it does not apply to-day to many parts of the province of Ontario as it did a few years ago. If, four or five years ago, rural mail routes were put up to tender, many people would have tendered for those routes. It is not the case to-day. Rural Ontario has been depleted and there are not enough men to attend to the wants of the country or to work on the farms. There are not many people in rural Ontario to-day vieing with each other to get mail contracts. They have other work to do. I merely ask that this resolution of the hon. member for Peterborough receive serious consideration and that action be taken with the view of doing justice to the rural mail carriers, because I maintain in all sincerity that they have not received just treatment in times past.

Mr. D. D. McKENZIE (Cape Breton North): Mr. Speaker, I do not know that I can add anything to what has been said by hon. gentlemen who have spoken on the resolution introduced by the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Burnham) but I wish to refer to what has been said, particularly by the hon. member for Frontenac (Mr. Edwards), with respect to the necessity of giving due consideration to the questions involved in this resolution. It is quite true that it is a dangerous thing to interfere with or disturb contracts once they are entered into. It might well be urged that one who undertook a contract would not care to lessen his price if the prices of oats, carriages and other things went down instead of up. That argument could well be used and he would say: That is one of the fortunes of war; and if the prices had gone up I would have had to put up with it. But we have extraordinary conditions in Canada to-day. We have war conditions and we have a springing up in the prices of horses, the feed of horses, vehicles and all that is necessary to outfit mail carriers. Therefore, I submit here, Sir, that the ordinary rules of conduct in dealing with contracts ought to be departed from to some extent and that justice ought to be done to the people who are immediately concerned. The hon. the acting-Postmaster General (Mr. Doherty) says that he is willing to seriously consider the question of cancelling contracts. Well, the situation is very much like that of a man who is in a government or other office and who says: I took this position when there were only my wife and myself; we got \$500 a year and we got along nicely on that. Now I have a family of ten or twelve, the prices of the necessities of life have gone up and what I used to get is not sufficient to keep body and soul together and to enable us to get along in the way in which we ought to. The minister would say: You can resign your office and go out; that is the only remedy I have to offer you. That is poor consolation to the man who has put his time and energy into the office with which he has been connected for a score of years and who is now not fit to do any other kind of work. It is poor consolation for the mail contractor, who has, perhaps, bought three or four horses for \$1,000, who has bought a number of carriages and who has acquired the means of operating the mail route for four years or more, to be told: You can forfeit your four horses and your carriages and resign. If you have lost money that is your luck, but