

Supply—Post Office

Mr. Coldwell: There are a number of other cases. I did not take a note of one that was given to me in the southern part of the province when I was there. I could not tell you the name of the village or hamlet. There are other cases, however. They may not be brought to the attention of the minister as I have brought this one to his attention at the present time. Perhaps by the very fact that he says something might be done if cases are brought to his attention, those who read *Hansard* or who read the newspapers will be enabled to bring other cases to his attention.

Mr. Coie (St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville): I shall be pleased to have those cases investigated.

Mr. Fair: Mr. Chairman, I also have a case of false economy to bring to the attention of the minister, but I shall wait until eight o'clock.

At six o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at eight o'clock.

The Chairman: We were considering item 311.

Mr. Fair: Mr. Chairman, when the committee rose at six o'clock I had given the Postmaster General notice that I had another economy measure to discuss with him after eight o'clock. This has to do with the service given by the Post Office Department at Furness post office, located on the Saskatchewan side of the fourth meridian. About 20 years ago two or three small country post offices were closed in order that the residents of this district might have rural mail service. A man by the name of W. A. McLeod was giving good service, though receiving only \$500 a year. This service was given twice a week over a 24-mile route, serving 31 householders. He had a four-year contract which expired on March 31, 1951. On March 30 service was suspended because Mr. McLeod refused to renew his contract at the old rate of \$500.

During the debate last session the Postmaster General told us that the average increase was 17 per cent. Mr. McLeod put in a tender at \$600, just slightly more than the 17 per cent increase, and indicated that he would not do the work for any less. That, I might add, is not a very big wage anywhere. In the midst of its economy drive, headed by the former Postmaster General, the Post Office Department would not increase the amount from \$500. After the residents were without mail service for nearly three months

[Mr. Cote (St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville).]

they got in touch with me and asked me to see the officials here in Ottawa. I got busy, starting away down the line, and continuing until I reached the deputy postmaster general. I was not able to get any increase for some considerable time. Finally they said they would have to do something about it, and offered to raise the amount to \$600. By that time the man who had been carrying on—and he is not a young man any more—had found other work to do. They were unable to get anyone else to tender. The postmaster at Furness offered to do the work for \$600 per year until such time as he could not do it by motorcar. The department decided that was not satisfactory. The result has been that those people have been without mail service of any kind. They do their business in Lloydminster, a town more than 20 miles away from most of those people.

I feel they are entitled to at least rural mail service, even though it costs a little more than \$600 a year. I believe the amount would have to be increased before anyone could be secured to do the work. While people in other parts of the country are enjoying daily mail service—and even complaining about that, with their mail delivered to their doors—those people away out in the country, the pioneers, have been without mail service for more than a year. They received their last mail a year ago last March.

Possibly the former Postmaster General was sent to the bench so we might have someone else heading the administration of the department. We now have a new man there. He is a good-natured looking fellow, and always has a smile. I do not know that he will always be able to say that he can grant requests made, but I would ask him to take this matter under advisement.

Mr. Abbott: I hope not; it would be hard on the treasury.

Mr. Fair: Let me remind the Minister of Finance that when he and the Minister of National Revenue want to levy taxes against the farmers in that section of the country, they see to it that those taxes are paid, and that they pay interest on the amount of unpaid taxes. So perhaps the Minister of Finance should reconsider his objections.

I have had a number of letters in the last few months from rural mail couriers who are asking that something be done for them. I know they are operating under the tender system. As I have explained to many of them, if they tender too low it is their own fault. But here was an instance of a man who had tendered at a reasonable rate but who will not receive the contract. He becomes fed up with the department, and will not