

could by actual experience determine for ourselves whether or not the time has come when this system should be inaugurated. In answer to the hon. member for East Lambton, the hon. Postmaster General, last year, as I find in Hansard, on page 5750, said :

I do not know what my hon. friend means when he says that rural delivery in the United States has been successful. The United States people were rather dragooned into the establishment of rural mail delivery, and it has raised very serious problems in the United States. I venture to say that in the very near future there will be a feeling in the United States that they were rather rash in rushing into that system.

The hon. member for West Toronto, Mr. [Name], asked, 'how were the United States dragooned into this system?' The Postmaster General does not answer that, but he goes on to say :

It is only a few years since the United States started that system, and now the expenditure has risen to about \$12,000,000 and is going in the near future to be many times that amount. For some time the officers throughout the country engaged in working the system represented it as a huge success, and succeeded in having those views certified to in the official reports of the Postmaster General of the United States. I think the more—

Let me pause here to say that although the Postmaster General seems to have thought that the Postmaster General of the United States was deceived as to what had actually taken place in that country, yet, perusing the reports of the Postmaster General for the United States of the last three or four years, including that for the financial year ending the 30th of June last, I find no indication whatever that the postal authorities there have been deceived or misled in any way in this matter; but, on the contrary, I find that down to a date even later than the last report—because I have taken the trouble to get later information—the uniform declaration is that in the United States at all events the system has been a great success. The hon. gentleman says further :

I imagine the Post Office Department undertaking to serve the people of this young country, with an area equal to that of the United States, in the same way as is done in smaller countries, such as England and in Europe. Fancy the establishment of a rural delivery system within an area the size of all Europe. That is what is involved in proposing to adopt rural delivery in Canada, and the first step of the Postmaster General would be to ask the House to vote \$5,000,000 or \$10,000,000, perhaps not the first year, but in a very short time. The first year perhaps \$1,000,000 or \$2,000,000 would be sufficient, but it would go on so that in five years the Postmaster General would have to ask the House to give \$10,000,000 or \$15,000,000 to establish rural de-

livery. It might be that in a few years we would be called upon to vote an item of probably not less than \$25,000,000.

I can hardly imagine that the Postmaster General was in earnest in saying that. Our total expenditure in connection with the Post Office Department, as was then pointed out, is less than \$5,000,000, and the United States, instead of beginning at even the moderate sum of \$1,000,000 or \$2,000,000, began the system with the expenditure of \$40,000. That was considered sufficient for the inauguration of the system in the first instance in 1897; the expenditure was \$50,000 in 1898, \$150,000 in 1899, \$450,000 in 1900, \$1,750,000 in 1901, \$3,993,740 in 1902, \$8,054,400 in 1903, and an estimate of \$12,921,700 for 1904—at the time the financial year closed the whole of this has not been quite expended. Now, taking into consideration the relative density of population, and our numbers as compared with those of the United States, the system, if inaugurated in Canada would of course for a long time be on a very limited scale. As a matter of fact, the United States intend to extend the rural mail delivery system only to those parts of the country where 100 families can be served on a route of twenty-five or thirty miles. So if you apply it to Canada it would not for a long time be necessary to extend it to a very great number of sections of the country or to expend on it a very large sum of money.

There is another feature to which I wish to call attention in connection with what my hon. friend the Postmaster General has said. Rightly or wrongly—and I submit by the reports wrongly—he concluded that difficulties have been found to exist in connection with the working of the system in the United States which render it impracticable here. But these difficulties do not really exist. The hon. gentleman says they started on the basis of paying for a courier and equipment \$500 a year. That may have been the case, but as far as I can find from investigation, it began at \$600 a year. However, that is not of very much consequence. He pointed out that the companies engaged in express and passenger traffic objected to these couriers carrying express parcels and passengers, with the result that these men engaged in the mail service demanded an increase of salary, and the result of the pressure brought to bear by the express companies and the others engaged in the carrying trade was that the government had to increase the pay to \$750 a year. That again is a misapprehension. I find that—not at the time the hon. gentleman spoke of, but later on—the government did increase the rate to \$720 a year, but that was only for the longer distances, and the expense ranges from that rate down to \$432 a year. The Postmaster General then went on to say that if we were to establish this