

three times that required in any other part of Canada. If he will do that I shall be able to go back to my people in my riding and explain it to them I hope to their satisfaction.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Mr. Chairman, the questions are piling up and the minister is still silent, but possibly one or two further questions would not disturb him too much. I concur in all that the hon. member for Peel has said. Everyone believes that the rural mail carriers should receive the bonus or an amount equivalent to the bonus. The minister has stated that some 4,034 carriers were paid the bonus during the period of the war, and that a number of others, I think some two thousand, were not.

Mr. BERTRAND (Laurier): May I correct the hon. gentleman? The 4,034 were those that asked for bonuses. The 4,164 were those who did not ask for them because their contracts were renewed, and at a time when these gentlemen knew what it would cost and therefore put on a higher figure.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: So the situation is this, in so far as the last number mentioned by the minister is concerned: these carriers are actually receiving an amount which must have taken into consideration the bonus to which they would have been entitled. Under this resolution the minister will be entitled to determine the payment of bonuses—with which no one can disagree—and he is to be authorized by parliament to pay moneys under mail contracts supplemental to the amount agreed to be paid to the contractor.

Mr. BERTRAND (Laurier): We are now getting into the details of the bill.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: No; I am discussing the resolution.

Mr. BERTRAND (Laurier): According to the bill, the Postmaster General will be allowed to pay a supplement to a contract which might be signed today, but only after the contract has been in operation for one year, and only when the contractor is able to furnish to the Postmaster General the reasons why he needs a bonus, which condition might arise in a year or so. He would have to furnish the Postmaster General with good and sufficient reason why he did not bid high enough when he put in his tender.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: That is exactly the point, and I know the Postmaster General's experience in the past has been that sometimes a person can make mistakes in recommendations. The minister will be in the position of determining which of the carriers shall receive an additional amount and which shall

not. It is against the placing of such a power in the hands of the minister that I rise to protest. I accept the necessity of all who have contracts receiving an amount equivalent to the bonus, but I deny the right of any minister to determine who shall be the beneficiary of an additional amount to be decided by him.

Mr. BERTRAND (Laurier): It cannot be chosen by the minister.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: The resolution says, "to authorize".

Mr. BERTRAND (Laurier): No.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: The minister is not going to have that power, then?

Mr. BERTRAND (Laurier): If a supplement is granted to a new contractor. Suppose a contract is signed tomorrow or the day after this bill comes into force. In that case he cannot ask for a change in the amount of his contract until one full year has elapsed, and only then if he comes before the officials of the department and gives the reasons why he needs more. Those reasons must be sufficient to indicate that it would not be fair for the Postmaster General to continue the contract at the original price. Furthermore, anybody who has a contract with the Postmaster General may at any time cancel his contract on giving due notice.

Mr. GRAYDON: Is the minister not afraid that might become a pork barrel?

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: The hon. member for New Westminster referred to the question of political interference in the civil service. I am not at the moment dealing with political interference, but my point is this. When one tender out of many is very low and this tenderer gets the contract for a year, the Postmaster General is placed in the position that that person, having so tendered, may receive the benefit of the Postmaster General's beneficence by being granted a changed amount.

Mr. BERTRAND (Laurier): Not at all.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Just a minute until I finish. I say that is unfair; it is a denial of the right of parliament to control expenditures voted by parliament. I had no idea it went as far as that. The resolution in its present form seems innocuous, and one could support it because he realizes that these couriers should receive a fair and reasonable amount for the work they do. But for the minister to ask parliament not only to make provision for the payment of bonuses, to which we all agree—at least I have not heard any disagreement on that—but in addition, to place in his hands