

Mail Contracts

in the house. I rise to mention it, and then to make one suggestion. In so far as the rural mail carriers in my district are concerned, in the New Westminster constituency there are seven rural routes. There is nothing comparable in any other constituency because, of those seven routes, the smallest has not less than 480 boxes, and the largest route has 687 boxes. There is a reason why, in cases such as that in my constituency, it is advisable to grant a bonus, and I will explain it in a moment.

Bids are called on contracts to deliver mail over a mileage route, and at the time they bid on the contract there may be only 250 boxholders on the route. British Columbia is expanding rapidly in population, and especially the districts of Vancouver, New Westminster and the lower Fraser valley. These seven routes were put into operation two years ago, and they are now going to double the number and have fourteen routes. Where a man bids on 250 boxes, shall we say, and finds in two years' time that there are 600 in the same mileage, and that he has to stop almost every few feet to deliver mail, surely in that instance he is entitled to more money.

What I suggest to the minister is that the rules and regulations of his department should be examined and revised because some of the regulations in the postal department are inadequate. They go away back to the early days, and they have not been brought up to date. When we suggest to the officials that, instead of a man handling 687 persons on one route, the people on that route should be provided with door to door delivery, the officials say, "Oh, the regulations will not allow it because the main post office in the constituency is not one that has enough revenue to warrant door to door delivery going out from that post office." I suggest to the minister that he and his officials should take note of the conditions in certain parts of Canada where the rural mail system should be changed, and thus relieve the heavy work of the rural mail carriers. I suggest that in the congested areas door to door delivery should be established even though they have not the up-to-date and modern conditions of the cities. It is far too much to expect any man to pick up mail in the morning and serve 685 boxes in a day.

Mr. Shaw: The minister stated a moment ago that in some instances the frequency of service to rural areas had been reduced. He gave as the reason for that the fact that the volume of mail had fallen off in many cases. That is undoubtedly true, but here is the situation which confronts us, in my part of the country anyway. In some instances the frequency of the delivery service has been

reduced from three days to two days a week, and there is an increase in the volume of mail delivered in every instance. That leads me to an intriguing question. What yardstick is used by the post office authorities in determining whether or not a tender is reasonable? I think that probably persons living in a district, knowing the conditions of the roads from season to season, are often in a better position to ascertain the problems and the costs involved than are persons who reside in the cities. As I say, I am very anxious to know just what yardstick is used in determining whether or not a tender is reasonable.

People become incensed when, after having had mail delivery to their boxes along the road three times a week for a period of many years, they find that the service has been reduced to once or twice a week, and are told that the reason for it is that all tenders were too high. I believe the minister owes us an explanation as to what standard is used when determining whether a bid is reasonable. I favour the principle of renewing contracts where the carriers are giving service. It takes quite a long time for these men to secure adequate equipment in order to give service in a highly efficient manner. It seems rather unfortunate, as the minister has stated, that in certain cases after a man has built up his equipment to a satisfactory state he has lost the contract simply because his tender happened to be \$5 more than that of somebody else who probably was not familiar with the problems encountered. My first question, however, is the important one.

Mr. Ferguson: I have had a great deal to do with the Post Office Department. It is not very often that it is humanly possible for a person to contact a member of the present government, but I want to say that I have taken many problems to the Postmaster General personally, and he has looked into them and remedied mistakes that have been going on for years, particularly as to rural deliveries. In the town of Barrie there was an old practice that no mail could be delivered to a house that did not have a sidewalk in front of it. I brought that to the attention of the Postmaster General and he could hardly believe it was a fact, but when it was established as a fact he agreed that it was a ridiculous practice. Immediately 170-odd people in the town of Barrie received mail delivery who had not been receiving it before because they had been denied it by a postmaster who apparently was not using his head, or was too much inclined to follow an old practice which should have been obsolete years ago.

I have known of rural mail carriers who have contended that they were not receiving enough money, but when I investigated I