

a few years ago, there was a fixed price according to locality. In certain localities the prices were too low; the department would not exceed a maximum price of \$30 a mile. Since the increase in the cost of living and in the cost of feed for horses and gasoline for motor vehicles, a large number of mail carriers have been carrying the mail at a loss, or at any rate, at a very small wage. As the member for Maisonneuve (Mr. Lemieux) said, the system has been a great boon to the farmers, and that in itself is a reason why we should not expect the mail carriers to work at such low wages, or to carry out their contracts at a loss. The Government would be justified in granting an increase on a sliding scale until the contracts have expired, and without asking for renewals. The present contractors have done the work in the past at low prices and it would be unfair to them to throw the service open to competition before the expiration of the contracts. I would certainly support the Government should they give these carriers an increase to cover the remaining periods of their contracts.

Mr. J. W. EDWARDS (Frontenac): For several years past I have brought this matter to the attention of the various gentlemen who have occupied the position of Postmaster General. Especially after the inauguration of parcel post delivery I interviewed the Postmaster General and pointed out to him how unfair the system was working in respect of those engaged in rural mail delivery. I commend the hon. member for Peterborough for bringing this matter to the attention of the acting Postmaster General and of the House. He should be congratulated because of the unanimity of view, so far as we can judge from those who have already spoken, and on the fact that those who have spoken have admitted that there is such a thing as the high cost of living for people who live in the country. One would judge from reading the press at times that what is called the high cost of living applies only to cities and towns and that in country districts it does not cost any more to live than it did in former days. This is a reason why the subject of the hon. gentleman's motion should be seriously considered by the Department. If we are to treat these servants of the public as others have been treated; if we are to treat these contractors for the carrying of mail in the country districts as other contractors have been treated, the Postmaster General should have power to revise the contracts. Contracts have been entered into in times past

[Mr. E. Proulx.]

for one year for the supplying of various articles to departments of the Government. On the holders of the contracts representing to the Government that the articles they were supplying were costing more than the contractors were paid for them, the period of the contract has in some cases been cut down from one year to six months. I believe that contracts to supply goods have been made for a period of six months rather than for a period of one year as was formerly the case. Most if not all of our rural mail delivery contracts are for a period of four years, and hundreds of people throughout the country who in good faith entered into these contracts have been put to increased expenditure by reason of the inauguration of the parcel post system and their being obliged to provide an extra horse or a larger rig in order to convey the mail; and have also been deprived of the small revenue they formerly obtained by carrying these parcels now carried as mail. They have put up with it and hundreds of the men have been operating at a loss. But with that characteristic stick-to-itiveness of men who live in the country districts, they have stuck to their contracts notwithstanding the fact that they have lost money. Not so those who have had contracts and who live in cities and towns. When the pinch came they began to squeal and they came to Ottawa and squealed loudly enough to get their contracts changed and their remuneration increased. My hon. friend from Rouville (Mr. Lemieux)—he represents two or three constituencies, but we will say Rouville—he was very fortunate in being elected to all of them—says that there is a saving clause in the contracts and that the Postmaster General has power to annul any contract by giving two or three month's notice. That is all right for the Government on the one side, but where does the other fellow get off? What chance has the fellow who has taken a contract? The hon. member for Rouville says: Let him take his plea to the acting-Postmaster General either by way of petition or through a delegation. He says that no doubt the acting-Postmaster General is a fair-minded man and that he will annul the contract and enter into a new one. That is not a fair way of looking at it. People in the country districts are entitled to every dollar of money that is being spent on rural mail delivery. Let me emphasize that fact, Mr. Speaker. There are thousands, and tens of thousands, of people living in the country districts who cannot importune