

may not get back for a week sometimes because of snow drifts and other difficulties. If it were not that some of these routes are being carried on by men who have to drive them on occasions, whether they take the mail or not, the men could not possibly do the work for the remuneration paid.

I suggest therefore that the minister give serious consideration to the suggestion of the member for Peel. The matter should not be left here with the passing of this resolution or with the enacting of the legislation which may be brought in to implement it; further investigation should be made by this house for the purpose of finding at least a better solution. I do not suppose there is any perfect solution, but we should try to find a better one for the grievances which, as every one of us knows, are very real throughout the country.

Mr. BOUCHER: I do not think we should look at this question entirely from the standpoint of the mail courier: If we compare the service that Canadians receive in the urban areas with that given in the rural areas, we shall see that the problem is a bigger one than that. The compensation to the courier has a direct effect on the service to the community.

Rural mail delivery is, I think, one of the greatest social advantages enjoyed by people in the country, and it is one thing in these days of post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation which we as members of parliament should look into. In rural areas remote from city, town or village post office, the mail courier goes out only on fair days, it being impossible for him to operate on stormy days or in foul weather. In the remote country districts the courier comes within a mile or three-quarters of a mile or perhaps half a mile of the home and people have to walk that distance to get their mail. I suggest that the compensation to the mail courier has a direct bearing on the service to the community, and therefore the tender system, which takes into account the effect on the economy of the government, has little significance to the people who get their mail delivered to them in this way. Indeed, it has a detrimental effect.

I suggest that every member should support the minister in increasing the pay of the couriers, but we shall be disappointed in him if he does not go further than the present resolution would indicate he is inclined to go.

Throughout the country there is a conflict between the services in mail delivery to urban residents and to rural residents. I do not think we in this house should do anything which would impede the service given the rural residents as compared with the service provided in urban areas. I do not think that

mileage is entirely the correct basis, and perhaps the number of box holders may not be even as efficient a standard as mileage. But there are more complicated questions to be tackled by this house, and we should not refuse to go the whole way and improve the situation, merely because there is some difficulty in calculating the index for compensation. If we are to be deterred by that difficulty, we are not competent to discharge our duty to those who sent us here.

Let us take the matter in our hands and decide to have a committee of the house select a much more efficient, if perhaps not a perfect, method of providing a better service to the rural areas and a greater measure of justice to the mail couriers. To this end I would urge the appointment of a select committee to go into the whole question and bring in recommendations to the house so that the matter may be dealt with as soon as possible.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Vancouver North): I had not intended to speak on this resolution—I thought it would receive the support of every hon. member—until I sat next to my colleague the hon. member for Montmagny-L'Islet and casually glanced at this excellent analysis of rural mail delivery statistics for Canada for March 31, 1946. In the seven years I have been a member of parliament I am sorry to say that I have been unable to get one single rural mail route established in my riding. There have been many parts of my riding which have demanded one, but every time the answer from the Postmaster General's department was to the effect that there were sufficient points of call in those rural areas of Sechelt, Robert's Creek and Powell River; I accepted that, and in blind faith passed that word back to my constituents. I now see a column here which certainly removes the hood from my eyes. I want to read to the committee the figures as to average number of boxes per route for districts across Canada. In the Calgary postal district the average number of boxes per route is 52; Moose Jaw, 35; Winnipeg, 59; North Bay, 50; Quebec, 54; Saint John, 41; Halifax, 47; Charlottetown, 52. In British Columbia—note this figure—there are 188. In other words we must have three times the number of boxes on a route before we can get it approved. The routes are all about the same length. They average in length from twenty to thirty miles. So when the minister introduces the bill to be based on this resolution I think in fairness to all British Columbia members he should explain why there is this difference in standard, why the number of box holders required on a route in British Columbia is