

Mail Contracts

the tax that was put on during the war. It is impossible to take off that tax at this time and it might be noted that for the coming year our huge surplus will completely disappear.

Mr. Cardiff: I think the Postmaster General is one of the most genial ministers we have. I come from a county where the mail carriers have perhaps one of the hardest jobs to do in the country. We are in a snow belt and I can understand that it is impossible to set a mileage rate. On the other hand, I would not like to agree to these supplementary rates without knowing when they are going to stop. Suppose we give the minister another year or two, what will he do at the end of that time?

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): I am not asking for an extension. Last year we asked for an extension of one year but this year we took the stand that we could not ask for an extension. All we are asking is that wherever a supplementary payment has been made we be permitted to merge it with the original contract price, should the contract be renewed. There are rural mail contractors whose contracts will expire this year. If a mail carrier has done his duty properly and asks for a renewal for another four years, without this legislation we would be unable to renew the contract at the contract price plus supplementary payment.

Mr. Cardiff: Why could you not let another contract? Why could you not call for tenders?

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): Perhaps we could do that, but the department has always felt that where a contractor has given good service, where he has purchased the necessary equipment such as an automobile and perhaps horses and sleigh for winter work, it is not fair at the end of his four years to call for tenders. Under the tender system we would have to accept the lowest tender and some other man might bid just a few dollars lower. It has been felt that it would be unjust to the man who has given good service if he were forced to tender every time his contract expired.

Mr. Cardiff: I am not opposing this, because I think these men deserve the supplementary payment; but I cannot figure where it is going to stop.

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): We are stopping this year; we cannot go any further except by asking for tenders.

Mr. Drew: That is a frank admission of what the minister expects.

[Mr. Bertrand (Laurier).]

Mr. Bradshaw: Do I understand the minister to say that he will not pay any more supplementary payments?

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): Not after March 31.

Mr. Bradshaw: A new contract would not include supplementary payments?

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): A contract would be renewed if a contractor asked for its renewal at the old price plus supplementary payment which had been made this year. If a contractor does not wish to renew we will have to call for tenders.

Mr. Case: I have tried to follow the minister and I understand that he now intimates that no one can apply for a supplementary payment.

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): After March 31.

Mr. Case: Could anyone apply for a supplement between now and March 31?

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): The law is here.

Mr. Case: That gives a little different picture. If these men know in advance they may be anxious to have supplements to their contracts.

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): They have to be reasonable in their demands.

Mr. Case: I understand that if a contract is being renewed it will include the contract price plus the bonus.

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): That is all we are asking for.

Mr. Case: There is no method by which you can make an adjustment later on if the costs of operation are lower?

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): We are coming back to normal times. I have been told quite often by members of the opposition that we are approaching normal times.

Mr. Case: The rural mail carriers are not satisfied even yet. They feel that their equipment should be considered, that certain amounts should be set up for depreciation, and so on. Personally my sympathies are with the rural mail carriers, and therefore I am not likely to oppose anything that sounds reasonable. Like the policeman on the beat, they turn out in all kinds of weather, and they bring a great deal of comfort to rural people by delivering their mail to them. With that clarification, knowing that they have from now until March 31 to apply for an increase supplemental to their contract, I will not oppose the measure.

Mr. Reid: There is an angle to the giving of a bonus that is not generally recognized