

*Supply—Post Office*

Therefore, we respectfully request that you bring the matter to the attention of the proper authorities and ask that our remuneration for services rendered be brought up to that minimum.

Mr. Chairman, I believe our rural carriers all across Canada perform a wonderful service in delivering the mail. They are perhaps somewhat like showmen in that the old proverb, "the show must go on" has an application for them. Come hell or high water, rain, sleet or snow, rural mail carriers feel the mail must be delivered and they see that this is done. I recall that one winter we had a severe storm which lasted for a number of weeks, and it was extremely difficult to deliver mail. I know of one particular case where for seven days in succession a carrier delivered his mail over a 24-mile route on foot through extremely deep snow.

I feel that some consideration should be given to these people. If they were in the civil service they would have already received a raise in pay. Perhaps the minister will say these people deliver mail under contract, and if they are not satisfied with the contract price all they have to do is give it up and tender on it again. That does not seem quite fair, as many of these contractors have held their contracts for long periods and they hesitate to give them up. Therefore they carry on and sometimes work actually at a loss.

There are a few suggestions I should like to pass along to the minister at this time which were passed along to me by a rural mail carrier. The first is that there should be some standardization of routes; they should be made longer. The present length of routes is based on horse and buggy days. Then it is suggested that the rural mail delivery be made a profession or occupation, not a side line. It is suggested that rates of pay be established with a certain amount of elasticity to provide for the different conditions in different districts. Contractors over 65 years of age who have had a lengthy term of service should be given a pension in keeping with their present contract prices.

I should like to endorse what the hon. member for Oxford has said about people in the post office with lengthy periods of service being entitled to pensions. When there is an amalgamation of routes the courier with seniority should be permitted to carry the new route. A pension plan should be established for the remainder, and there should be holidays with pay, sick benefits, group insurance and so forth.

Under the present system no route will sustain itself and provide the class of equipment which the public expects the courier to drive, notwithstanding the courier's own

[Mr. McBain.]

pride. This makes it necessary for him to go out and work all hours at all kinds of work, or else have some other member of the family drive the route while the contractor seeks more remunerative employment. I ask the minister and the department to give serious consideration to these suggestions. I think it is only fair to the rural mail carriers and contract mail carriers in Canada that they should be given the same consideration as the civil service recently received.

**Mr. Montgomery:** There are two matters I wish to deal with, one of which can be brought up under this item and the other one I shall bring up later. I just received a letter asking why the post office at Debec in Victoria county has been moved from the main street to another business section.

**Mr. Lapointe:** I shall endeavour to get the information before these estimates are completed.

**Mrs. Fairclough:** In March of this year I put a number of questions on the order paper to which I received answers. The reason I asked those questions was the reduction in urban mail deliveries from two to one a day. Mail from the east and west hits Toronto at seven or eight o'clock in the morning, but any mail destined for Hamilton does not reach that city until after the first mail delivery has gone out. The result is that a great deal of business mail is 24 hours late, because many business firms are still on the one a day delivery. With that in mind I inquired of some of these companies as to what procedure they followed in getting their mail and I found that a number of companies have been unable to rent post office boxes at the general post office, and therefore have adopted the procedure of having the post office staff collect their mail which they pick up at the letter carrier wicket. I do not mean the general delivery wicket; as the minister knows, the letter carrier wicket is located in another part of the post office.

I have been informed that at the main post office in Montreal there are 774 post office boxes, 473 of which are rented, leaving a balance of 301 unrented. There are 2,022 companies or individuals who pick up their mail daily or perhaps several times a day at the letter carrier wicket. In Toronto there are 352 post office boxes at the main office; 350 are rented with 2 unrented; there are 1,925 companies or individuals who pick up their mail at the letter carrier wicket. In Hamilton there are 378 post office boxes in the main office, 376 of which are rented with 2 empty, and 132 companies or individuals pick up their mail at the letter carrier wicket.