

fied with accepting lower tenders, tenders far below the figure for which the same mail service had been performed under the previous government, but the system that prevails under the Post Office Department to-day is such that when a number of tenders come in for a mail contract in a rural district and the tender submitted by the old contractor is somewhat above the figure submitted by a new tenderer, the old contractor is written to and asked if he will not lower his tender to meet the figure of his competitor. In many cases the former contractor, desirous of still having the mail contract awarded to him, is driven by that fact to lower his tender so that it will be equal to or a few dollars below the lowest tender that has been submitted. That system should not prevail. Under the Post Office Act we were compelled to accept the lowest tender no matter who the tenderer might be but during the last few years this act has been set aside and the lowest tender is not always accepted. I feel that a contractor who has given satisfaction should have every opportunity of having his contract renewed under the tender system provided he is on an equal basis with the other tenderers. I deprecate the idea that because another tenderer happens to be lower the old contractor should be asked to go still lower in order to obtain the contract. Had I had the honour of continuing as Postmaster General after the 1930 elections I would have brought before the house, as I said I would in 1929, some system whereby mail contractors would be placed upon a more equitable basis and receive a more equitable remuneration for their work. I believe the system which I advocated at that time is better than the present contract system.

To attempt to establish in Canada a system similar to that in effect in the United States would be very impracticable. On the basis of the 1929-30 cost such a system would cost at least \$7,000,000 to \$8,000,000 more than the figure for that year. I do not intend to labour the matter, but it appears as though the chickens were coming home to roost. When the estimates of the Postmaster General were up in 1929 hon. friends opposite debated this question. Promise after promise was made but the promises have not been carried out. Whether this was because of financial inability makes no difference to me at the present time. Hon. gentlemen opposite made the promises, and five years after they assumed the reins of office is too late to come forward and say, "We cannot carry out those promises because the financial condition of the federal treasury will not permit." In 1929 they seemed

[Mr. Veniot.]

to depend a great deal upon the mail contractors' association for the information upon which they based their argument for a \$70 per mile system, and they should have been fair enough to make known to that association at an earlier date that they were not able to carry out the promises made in 1930.

Mr. FRASER (Northumberland): Is it consistent with the laws governing the Department of Labour that men in the unemployment camps should be employed on the construction of public buildings and receive only twenty cents per day plus maintenance while within a few miles other men are employed on the construction of government buildings under the Labour department schedules?

Mr. GORDON: I shall not undertake to cover the ground with respect to these unemployment relief camps, because it has been covered at length by the minister in charge of the department. This history of the necessity for the establishment of these camps is well known. It has been said that this is a twenty cents per day wage. Let those who still adhere to that euphonious way of describing these camps have whatever comfort, political or otherwise, they can get out of it; it does not make any difference to me. The reason for the establishment of these camps was the utter incapacity and alleged inability of the provinces to take care of men who were unable to take care of themselves. No one is forced into these camps, and only the transgressors are forced out of them. The men get food and are furnished splendid clothing; they are not overworked and they receive this gratuity. So far as I am aware these camps are better than similar camps which have been established south of the forty-ninth parallel. It was never intended that this twenty cents per day should be a wage. Wherever it has been necessary to erect buildings and employ artisans, the artisans employed are paid the current wages.

Let me point out that these camps do give sanctuary to these men. Men who have been totally and absolutely unable to take care of themselves have been given food and shelter. Every possible step has been taken by those in charge to keep in touch with industry in order that men may be returned to industry without a shaken morale and in good shape physically. The camps have provided a clearing house for almost 24,000 men who have been returned to industry after a more or less temporary sojourn rendered necessary by the stress of the times through which we are passing. Instead of taking sides