

Mail Contracts

granted, so why should we not consider that matter today?

The Deputy Chairman: That is not before the committee. We simply have an amendment to embody these bonuses in any contracts that may be renewed.

Mr. McLure: Should we not be able in some way to take up this matter of discrimination?

Mr. Bertrand (Laurier): If when my estimates are before the committee the hon. gentleman gives me the name of the route I will be able to tell him the reason for any supplement that may have been given. Today the hon. gentleman is not saying what supplements have been added to these contracts, and it is absolutely impossible to identify any of the routes from the figures he has given.

Mr. McLure: I do not want to be out of order, but I have before me a list of all the mail services in my constituency, showing the mileage and so on. I obtained this list from the Post Office Department. I can rewrite it and give the Postmaster General a copy, which would enable him to identify the routes; then probably at a later date he would be able to answer fully in regard to these discriminations. If there will be an opportunity to bring up this question when the estimates are under consideration, I shall be glad to take advantage of that opportunity. I had hoped, however, that before this bill to legalize these discriminations passed this house we might have the department review them, to see that the couriers were paid on a proper, equal basis.

I would like to draw attention to one other matter. It seems to me that in reference to some of these contracts now being let the department is going out of its way to specify what is required in calling for tenders. Just recently one advertisement specified that no one should tender unless he was in a position to provide a half-ton truck for summer delivery and a snowmobile for the winter.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. McLure: Is that out of order, Mr. Chairman?

The Deputy Chairman: That would not be in order. I think the hon. member will be able to deal with all those matters on the estimates.

Mr. McLure: I did not have a chance to deal with them before I was called to order, and I want to know whether this will be in order when we come to the estimates.

The Deputy Chairman: Yes.

Mr. McLure: I might mention one other matter, if you will permit me. A short time

[Mr. McLure.]

ago a contract was advertised concerning a route which had been looked after for several years by the same individual. He had not been given the bonus he required, but the department cancelled the advertisement and asked a returned soldier to take over the contract. I am in favour of a veteran having the contract, but this man was in receipt of a small pension which was to apply as part payment of the amount of the contract, which was for some \$2,400. However, I can also take up this matter when the estimates are under consideration, and I shall expect the minister to be prepared to answer these questions.

Mr. Shaw: Yesterday I brought forward a matter, but I did not press it at that stage because I did not desire to delay passage of the resolution. However, I do feel that at this time we should be given some information with respect to the yardstick used in determining whether or not certain tenders are reasonable. I rather visualize this sort of situation, where perhaps a man has held a contract for three or four years at, let us say, \$300. Tenders are called, and the lowest tender for the contract is now \$100 in excess of the previous figure. We know of such tenders being rejected on the ground that they are too high, and I believe the minister should indicate to us now what is the basis used to ascertain whether a tender is reasonable or unreasonable, because it definitely affects the sort of service being given many people on these rural routes. As I pointed out yesterday, I have definite evidence that the frequency of service has been reduced because the post office officials have held that the lowest tender is too high. As I say therefore, they have reduced the service.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I should like to point out to the hon. member that the question of tenders is not a matter that would come under this amendment. This amendment is for the purpose of attempting to embody the bonus in any contract up until March 31.

Mr. Shaw: In a broad, general way, Mr. Chairman, that is correct. On the other hand, the wisdom or otherwise of authorizing the government to continue the payment of bonuses must be considered in the light of the method employed by the government in granting contracts to mail carriers. If there is a flaw in the method used by the department in the letting of tenders then it would be within my right, I should assume, to question the payment of bonuses.

I can visualize a situation of this kind occurring, for example. The department