

one courier is getting \$60 a mile and his neighbour is getting \$28.41 a mile. Both these men are given a wartime bonus. I should think that when the bonus was applied for and the minister or the department saw fit to grant it, at least both these men should have been given a bonus which would bring them up to approximately the same amount per mile.

Let me mention another case. One courier has a route which is 43.2 miles long. The next door neighbour has a route of 29 miles. The difference in the pay of the two men is \$125 a year. The minister should look into these cases and so arrange matters that the bonuses are not such as to bring about discrimination against some of these couriers.

I should like the minister to tell us how he arrives at the wartime bonus and the operational bonus, because some of these routes have been up for tender since the end of the war, and wartime bonuses are being paid on them at the present time.

Mr. REID: On many occasions I have listened to discussions about mail couriers, and I know that every hon. member, including myself, is in sympathy with the views expressed by the hon. member for Peel. I wrote to the mail couriers and propounded this question—and hon. members might just as well face it when we are dealing with this matter. I asked them this question: Will you give me some advice as to what stand I should take if a committee is set up to deal with the matter and the government proposes to place the rural mail carriers in so far as employment is concerned under the same conditions as the postmaster? What do you think will happen or what do you suggest should be done with the present mail couriers? That is a practical question. It is a problem that should be solved by the house. What will you do with that great group? Will you fire them and make appointments under the civil service commission, or will you take these men and some women, some of whom are seventy years of age, back into the service?

While I am not going to extol the tender system I believe it is the one and only system left in the government service at which no one can point a finger and say there is patronage there, either civil service patronage or any other; and on this I shall have something to say later in the session. One cannot point the finger of political patronage at the system, because it is done by tender. Mileage is only one aspect of the matter. In the constituency I have the honour to represent we have the largest number of box holders of any rural route in Canada. We had last year on one route as many as 750 box holders, whereas in

Ontario or Quebec 65 would be regarded as a good route. How are you going to deal with the man who has to take care of 780 box holders? He goes early in the morning and sorts his mail and is lucky if he gets home at five o'clock at night.

Before the matter is dealt with, I think a committee should study it, because there are many adjustments to be made. While there are rural postmasters who may be doing a good deal of work, there are many in the country who are doing very well. I know of rural postmasters who are receiving up to \$1,500 a year, over fifty per cent of the cost of stamps, and when it comes to selling their business they have no sad story to tell because they hold out to the intending buyer to the end. I join with the member for Peel in pointing out that there are many aspects of the situation that have not yet been mentioned.

Mr. IRVINE: I see no reason why I should oppose the resolution; so far as it goes it brings some benefit to people who are badly in need of attention. On the other hand, I find myself in substantial agreement with the point of view expressed by the member for Peel.

I do not think we should regard this resolution as adequately meeting the situation which confronts the rural mail carriers throughout the country. I appreciate, of course, the difficulties presented by the hon. member for Montmagny-L'Islet. He did open up the subject sufficiently for us to see how great the difficulties are in effecting improvements which will be fairly satisfactory throughout the dominion. But to say that just because difficulties exist we must accept a defeatist attitude and not try to do anything about it seems an unreasonable position to take. It is precisely because the difficulties are there that we should adopt some suggestion such as has been made by the member for Peel. I do not see any reason why, while carrying this resolution and proceeding with that slight improvement, the house should not appoint a special committee to make a complete investigation of the whole delivery system in the rural districts of Canada. And here the viewpoints of the men who drive the mails, and of the various rural postmasters, should be considered in the effort to find a solution.

Some hon. members today have spoken about hundreds of mail boxes, and so on. I can tell you of mail routes with hundreds of miles to a mail box, where the rural mail deliveries are tremendous tasks, where the man in charge may be away two or three days and