

Supply—Post Office

effort to re-instil into his staff that wonderful spirit, the esprit de corps that they had, the thought that they have an important job which they must do and which they must not leave unfinished. If he can do that he will be worthy of the gratitude of the citizens of this country. I am quite confident that he is able to do that, but the job is not easy.

Speaking of the rural mail carriers I would suggest that efficiency is very important in the government, but I do not believe there is any more efficient way to operate our rural carriers than on the tender system. I would point this out to the minister, and to ask him for some action, if possible, during this year. I would have no complaint about the tender system if the cost of living were not rising; but just imagine a person who tendered for a mail route four years ago and today is operating at that same tender price, when we all know that the cost of his gasoline, of his automobile and of his own time has practically doubled. Now he is in a position where he is not adequately paid, and the only way he can have any adequate readjustment is by asking to have his route put up for tender.

Everyone knows there are many mail carriers, and I would point this out if I may. In my riding the best rural mail carriers are those who have been doing the job for some time. For some reason or other they are better regarded by the people they serve. Perhaps it is because they operated in a different era than those who are starting today. But I am quite confident that they give the best service, and they are the ones who have to put their jobs up for tender, not because they want more money for doing the job but in order to cover the increased costs of operation and of their living.

I would ask the minister, therefore, to give every consideration to these people, and to find some means of giving better treatment to the employee who is most conscientious, the one who has operated for years and years and about whom the members of parliament hear no complaints whatever. Some way should be found of adjusting the salaries of these employees in order to balance up the increased cost of living. If the minister could do that he would be doing a service to all the people who enjoy the benefits of our wonderful mail service in this country.

Before I sit down, Mr. Chairman, I would like to say that my deskmate, the hon. member for Kent, who is absent through illness, has asked me to say that he has

exactly the same feelings as those I have expressed tonight.

Mr. McLure: At the outset I might say, Mr. Chairman, that on Monday, June 9, when the Postmaster General introduced his estimates, I was anxious to congratulate him on being appointed to this high position in the cabinet. Let me say to him that we may be criticizing his department, but I want him to understand that my criticisms will be directed against the department and not against him because he is a new man on the job. A year from now, if we all come back, we might then direct our criticisms against the Postmaster General. I would say to the Postmaster General that the best slogan for him to adopt would be to be like the postage stamp; if it is to be of any use, it must stick to its job. The Postmaster General must do the same. Some postmasters general took too active a part in politics, especially in by-elections, but they are not with us now so we had better leave them alone.

With reference to the postal department, I do want to say that it serves more people and comes in contact with more people than possibly all the other departments put together. It is a great manufacturing department. It is the one department that manufactures a little article called a stamp; no one really knows the cost of it, but I am told that it is about 1/100th of a cent. This department sells some stamps for 1 cent, some for 2 cents, some for 3 cents and a huge number of them at 4 cents. Then they sell some more costing 5 cents, 10 cents and as high as 20 cents. It is for that reason I call the department a great manufacturing department, and that is where the profits come from.

For years I have been interested in this department, because there was always a surplus of \$10 million, \$12 million and sometimes as high as \$13 million. All of a sudden this huge profit disappeared and became a deficit of over \$1 million. I do not think that should have happened. After having the benefit of increasing the rates by 50 per cent, the department shows a decline from a profit of \$10 million or \$13 million to a deficit. It is very difficult for me to understand how that could take place. I am not going to deal with many generalities, because I have too many problems nearer and dearer to me than the generalities of the postal department. I see the Minister of Public Works putting on his glasses to get another look at me.

I might say, Mr. Chairman, that I have nothing but the highest praise for the great