

has to obtain the necessary equipment, and in some fashion or other must pass the cost of it on to the Post Office Department. Our intention therefore is to continue the contracts of those who have contracts with bonuses and who want to renew those contracts with bonuses. It does not touch at all those who are not yet contracting with the department. They will have to tender, just like other people, and the lowest tenders will prevail.

This provision implies a certain discretion in the Postmaster General. We are therefore asking for the extension only to a time limit of sixty days after the beginning of the next session.

Mr. GRAYDON: I am sure the committee will wish to support any measure designed to alleviate a condition in the public service which has existed far too long. But like many government measures this is what would be called in rural circles a ramshackle approach to the problem. The treatment given to the rural mail couriers has been a sore spot in the public service. Many of us in the house, both on this side and on the other side, have argued in vain on behalf of these people—and I hope not much longer, in vain, because patience sometimes reaches the point of exhaustion, and so far as the rural mail carriers are concerned, patience was exhausted some considerable time ago.

Mr. GRANT: 1930.

Mr. GRAYDON: That may be so; and I suppose we could go back even farther, because the last time he said something about this in the house the Postmaster General referred to 1867—I happen to have his remarks in *Hansard*. The hon. member and the Postmaster General had better go back to the age to which they belong.

Many of us have asked for a square deal for the rural mail carrier. Those of us who for many years had our mail delivered by the rural mail carrier realize that he is something more than a driver of a coach or a wagon or a buggy or a car, carrying the mail to the farmers of Canada. He is part and parcel of the community. He is an institution in rural Canada. In addition to carrying the mail he gives service which perhaps need not be mentioned here but which has been a great boon to farmers.

The present tender system leads to economy, but it is a dangerous kind of economy; it is a false economy. It leads to more than that; it leads to an unjust economy. Why do others in the public service have a different standard of employment from that applicable to those who deliver His Majesty's mail

throughout rural Canada? Is there any other member of the public service of Canada who must submit a tender every time he gets a job? Why single out the men who serve the farmers? I am told that a recent survey made by the rural mail carriers association shows that ninety-nine per cent of the rural mail carriers are opposed to the present contract system. That in itself ought to be an indication that something is radically wrong.

Mr. BERTRAND (Laurier): I should like to—

Mr. GRAYDON: I did not interrupt the minister. Last night he was very good at asking questions of the hon. member for Lake Centre, but he had better just stay where he is and he will have a chance after a while. I am going to deal with him a little more fully in a moment.

Those people believe that a basic mile rate ought to be instituted. Some of them have suggested a basic rate of \$50 a mile, with special rates for the "out of the ordinary routes." I suggest to the minister that what is nothing less than farcical treatment of the rural mail carriers of Canada cannot be completely cured by a bill such as is proposed. You cannot cure this situation by applying a poultice when a surgical operation is necessary. The government ought to evolve a general policy with respect to rural mail carriers. It is not enough for the minister to come into the house with legislation of this kind, a half-baked piece of legislation, something that hardly touches the problem at all. We must have something better than that.

On August 6 last the minister was speaking in the house, as reported on page 4390 of *Hansard*. He was referring to the fact that the Post Office Act permits the awarding of a contract for \$200 or less without asking for tenders, and then he went on to say:

This provision goes back to 1867. If we had had time this session I would have brought in amendments to the Post Office Act to increase this amount from \$200 to \$500, because I admit that today \$500 is worth no more than \$200 was in 1867.

Is the minister still of the same frame of mind as he was on August 6? Are we to have a bona fide amendment to the Post Office Act to cover the rural mail carriers—yes, and the rural postmasters as well, who are also a forgotten class in Canada? Are we to have some general policy? Up to the present time perhaps the government might have argued that they were so busy cleaning up the debris of war that they could not go into the problems of peace as they normally might wish to do. But surely it cannot be said that this is anything but a peace session.