

Supply—Post Office

to be adjusted or reviewed from time to time; but it does seem possible that a committee might be used by the inspector in his central office to make some satisfactory arrangement without having to resort to the tender system which, as has already been shown, militates against the faithful people throughout the country who have done a good job for so long. I just ask the minister if he will not consider having some arrangement adopted whereby the tenders can be done away with and a better system set up to recompense the people who carry the mail.

I also just want to take this opportunity of telling the minister that I congratulate him on his succession to this very important position. I like the attitude with which he has started out on his career, and I am sure it will be a long and enjoyable one.

Mr. Darroch: With much that has been said about rural mail couriers I am entirely in agreement, but I do not know just how the department would get around the tender system. I suppose stated rates per mile could be worked out, but I imagine if they were changed and no tenders called we would hear charges of political interference and patronage. I certainly would not want to see the matter given to the civil service commission because it would not be very long before they would be demanding that a person have a couple of years in a recognized university before they could apply for the job.

The hon. member for Wellington South expresses what I think is a good idea as far as rural mail couriers are concerned and I think there is another matter that concerns people in rural communities with respect to mail delivery. It is that there should be a realignment of rural mail routes. Most of the present rural mail routes were laid out in the days of the horse and buggy and before the day of the plowed road. I think consideration will have to be given to rearranging a majority of the routes.

I want to say this for the department, that any time I have asked them to put an extension on a route I have been fairly successful—

An hon. Member: You have been lucky.

Mr. Diefenbaker: You must be persuasive.

Mr. Darroch: It must be my approach.

The Chairman: Order.

Mr. Darroch: On one occasion recently I was asked: Do you think we should give rural delivery to every farmer? I said "yes", and I still think that. I certainly would not agree with the hon. member for Wellington South and the fair and hon. member for Hamilton West on their suggestions to

the minister that he inaugurate twice a day deliveries in the cities. Before I could agree to that I would suggest that rural mail routes would have to be rearranged. I think people in towns and villages of 1,000 population and over have a right to one delivery a day before their city cousins go back to two a day. I use the figure of 1,000 and over because those of you who know the conditions in rural Ontario, and I suppose they are general throughout the country, know that in urban municipalities of 1,000 and over quite a number of people probably have to go a mile to the post office and a mile back for their mail. I think before people in the cities are granted delivery twice a day these people have a right to some consideration, and I would urge the minister to give this his consideration. Perhaps something can be done about it by the time another session rolls around.

If people want special delivery they should be willing to pay for it. I think these special delivery rates are quite reasonable for the service given.

There is another matter that is peculiar to the district from which I come and about which I would like to make a few suggestions to the minister. It is proposed to have a change in the rail service from Palmerston to Kincardine and from Palmerston to Southampton. This of course will mean a change in the method of mail delivery. I believe the proposal is to carry the mail on trucks. We know they did that for a period during the railway strike, and I think probably as a result of that experience the department are prone to believe that it would be more economic and satisfactory to deliver mail to that district that way than to use the trains. But I would point out to the department that there is one very peculiar thing about our district. It is that we have a lot of bad weather and bad roads.

At the time mail was delivered on trucks—and I quite agree a fairly good service was given though only first-class mail was delivered—it took place in September under ideal weather conditions. Those conditions will only prevail for six or seven months of the year. I do not think I am wrong in saying there are at least five months of bad weather in our part of the country. I also believe they took a traffic and weather census this winter, and as a result of that census they found the roads were open for a great majority of the days. Again I would point out to the department that it was an exceptionally favourable winter for that type of census. From my own experience, and I have spent over fifty winters in that district,