

Supply—Post Office

up in the house on many occasions. I refer to the problem of charges on food parcels to the United Kingdom. I do not think there is an hon. member in the house who is not aware of the explanations that have been given on former occasions. We have been told many times that one of the mail problems is the reluctance of the post office department of the United Kingdom to make any reasonable concessions in the matter of postal rates in their country. However, we live in a country of plenty and there are a great many people in Canada who have friends and relatives in the old land. They are worried about them. They would like to help them out if only to the extent of one food parcel a month, but when they take their parcels to a post office they find all too frequently that the cost of the postage on the parcel exceeds the cost of the food contained therein. They are quite willing to buy the food and send it to their friends and relatives in the old land, but they cannot see why the government of Canada should not go along with them at least part of the way in some sort of alleviation of the added expense of postal charges.

I have here a letter which has come to me within the current month. Again I shall not read it into the record because it is the old story. Why can we not have lower postal rates on food parcels to Great Britain? As my second main question I ask the Postmaster General whether his department cannot consider some concessions in postal rates on food parcels to the old country without regard to the fact that the United Kingdom cannot accede to any request that may be made by this government for collaboration in that respect.

In an effort to co-operate with the Postmaster General's department and with the house in general I shall only make these two requests. In the first instance I ask that two a day delivery at least be reinstated on residential walks throughout the country, and in the second place I ask that serious reconsideration be given the postal rates on food parcels to Great Britain.

Mr. MacKenzie: Mr. Chairman, I quite appreciate that at this time of the session any long drawn out remarks would be very unpopular. As a matter of fact I am very glad the Minister of Public Works has left, because he was giving me a rather frowning look a few minutes ago, and I do not want to be diverted from the few observations I should like to make. I quite agree with those who have spoken that across the board economy should be practised in all government departments; but do not forget that the Post Office Department goes hand in hand

with the development and progress of our great dominion. I think it is one of the last departments where we should make any drastic cuts in service in order to practise economy, because to me that would be false economy.

I suppose this question has come up every time the estimates of the Post Office Department have come before the house. I want to speak for a moment about rural mail delivery and the rural set-up as we have it in this country. Rural mail delivery was established in Canada some 44 years ago. That is a long time ago. The riding of Lambton-Kent which I have the honour to represent has some 80 rural mail services. There are in Canada approximately 5,200 rural mail routes with about 7,500 side services, which means that we have all told around 12,700 rural mail routes and side services throughout Canada. These couriers travel approximately 120,000 miles a day and deliver mail to approximately 375,000 boxes throughout the dominion, so they render quite a service and the work they do is quite extensive.

As hon. members will recall, last year the Post Office Act was amended so the postal department could adjust salaries paid under rural mail contracts that were less than \$1,000 per annum. To me that was not a forward step. To me that did not solve the problems of rural mail delivery at all. As a matter of fact I am inclined to think it rather complicated the situation because at the moment there is a certain amount of discrimination. The person who is receiving under \$1,000 gets his salary adjusted but the person who is receiving over \$1,000 must throw the route open to public tender; and under the Post Office Act it is emphasized so often by the officials that the lowest tender must be accepted provided the party is reliable and furnishes good bondsmen.

The service was started under a public tender system and the tender is for a contract for a full year. I do not know of any other branch of the post office service that operates under a public tender system. There is no other branch having to do with Her Majesty's mail that I know of that employs the contract system. Don't forget that the janitors and caretakers in the post offices do not tender for their positions. Their jobs are set up for them and the positions are awarded through the civil service commission. There is a mail courier in Watford, Ontario, who has delivered mail for some 42 years. I would think that is something of a record. During those 42 years of service he has never to my knowledge had a public tender called because he had established himself and could not afford to