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THE OBJECTIONS TO FREE RURAL MAIL DELIVERY

The Second of a Series of Articles Written for the Canadian Dairyman and Farming World, by an Editorial Representative of this Paper, who Recently Visited the United States, with the Object of Studying the Free Rural Mail Delivery System.

EVER since free rural mail delivery was commenced in the United States twelve years ago, the Dominion Government has refused to introduce the system in Canada. Why? Rural delivery has proved very popular in the States. There has been every reason to believe that it would prove equally popular in Canada. Nothing but the strongest reasons, therefore, could have induced our Government to take the stand it has. If it has refused to introduce free rural delivery because it has conscientiously believed that the expense of the system would prove disastrous, and can prove that such would be the case, its stand cannot be too highly commended.

OBJECTIONS TO THE SYSTEM

What then are the objections of the Government? Desiring to secure them direct, The Canadian Dairyman and Farming World obtained a personal interview with Hon. Rudolphe Lemieux, Postmaster-General. The reception he accorded our representative was cordial and frank:

"The two great objections I see to the introduction of free rural mail delivery," said Hon. Mr. Lemieux, "are, first, the great expense; and, second, the difficulty of knowing what to do with our thinly populated rural sections. Such sections would be quick to demand a similar service. What, for instance, would we do with my own constituency of Gaspé, or with the people on the Labrador coast or those in such sections as North Pontiac, Quebec? Once free rural mail delivery was introduced in this country, the people in those and similar districts would demand the service. To attempt to give it to them would be impracticable.

"Free rural mail delivery might prove a success in such sections as Norfolk and Essex Counties, Ontario. They are grid-ironed with railways, and thickly populated. We must, however, always remember the sparsely settled sections.

IN SYMPATHY WITH THE MOVEMENT

"My sympathies are with this movement for free rural delivery. Before we can introduce this system, however, we must decide, first, if it is practical, and, second, if our farmers can stand the immense expense it would involve. I am ready to be enlightened on these points and will

read with interest the articles that are to be published in The Canadian Dairyman and Farming World, and will be open to receive suggestions from them."

NOT FOR TWENTY YEARS

It is possible that Hon. Mr. Lemieux, while



HON. RODOLPHE LEMIEUX, POSTMASTER-GENERAL FOR CANADA

Hon. Mr. Lemieux's views on Free Rural Delivery are published on this page. He has expressed his willingness to obtain suggestions from the articles on this subject that are being published in The Canadian Dairyman and Farming World, and says that he stands for an improved postal service.

speaking to our representative, felt that he was really talking to the farmers of the country and, therefore, was guarded in what he said. At any rate, he did not speak as strongly in opposition to free rural delivery as he has once or twice in the House of Commons. Last April, Hon. Mr. Lemieux made the following statement in the House:

"While I was in Washington recently, I studied with some of the post office officials there the question of rural delivery. I found that, instead of being a boon to the public, it was a great deficit producer to the department, in fact, to-day at Washington the question is seriously considered whether they will not have to restrict the rural mail delivery instead of expanding it. We are not ready to spend millions to establish all over Canada a rural mail delivery system. With the experience of the United States before us we cannot think of giving this country rural free delivery. When we reach a population of twenty millions—which I hope we may under this good Government—if I am still Postmaster-General I can promise a free rural mail delivery."

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE'S VIEWS

No member of the Cabinet has been more outspoken in opposition to the introduction of free rural delivery than Hon. Sydney Fisher, Minister of Agriculture. In the House of Commons early in December, Hon. Mr. Fisher showed that the expenditure of the United States Government in 1897, the first year, upon the service, was only \$14,000, and how it increased in 1898 to \$50,000; in 1899 to \$150,000; in 1900 to \$450,000; in 1901 to \$1,750,000; in 1902 to \$4,000,000; in 1903 to \$8,580,000; in 1904 to \$12,900,000; in 1905 to \$21,000,000; in 1906 to \$25,800,000; and in 1907 to \$28,350,000. Continuing, he pointed out that the United States Government estimates that the expenditure upon rural free delivery this year will be \$35,000,000.

Last November, Hon. Mr. Fisher, in a speech delivered at Masonville, Que., made the following statement in regard to free rural mail delivery:

"The experience in the United States is not such as to warrant our following their example. They began spending \$14,000 on this in 1907, and raised it gradually until they spent \$420,000 in 1900. The United States post office showed a deficit last year of over \$10,000,000, but if it had not been for their rural mail delivery they would have had a surplus of at least \$10,000,000.

"These are fearful figures and when you remember that our country, while its population is only six millions as compared to the eighty millions of the United States, has an area almost as large to serve, with a scattered population it would mean that we would be overburdened by an expenditure for rural mail delivery which the population of this country would never submit to and which they could not stand.