

Supply—Post Office

Just how the hon. member would suggest we approach that problem, I do not know. In some years there have been campaigns to be kind to animals. I must say that the post office tries to be kind to every type of animal with which it has to deal. We sometimes wonder, however, whether the campaign should not be "to be kind to letter carriers". Perhaps there may be some way of enlisting the help of some of the finer dogs who do help the letter carrier by accompanying him along his route just because of the love they have in their hearts for the uniform of the Post Office Department.

It is a serious subject, because the owners of dogs must not forget that they are likely to lose letter carrier service to their homes if the dog prevents the letter carrier from delivering the mail. In addition, they are always liable to be charged for any workmen's compensation which may result from any injury their dog may have caused to the letter carrier. I would be very pleased if the hon. member would co-operate with me in some form of campaign to make sure that Canadian dogs are provided with a more orthodox type of dog food than the letter carriers of the Post Office Department.

I believe I can truly say that the many points that were raised by hon. members were pretty well discussed before the estimates committee. Of course that is no reason why they should not be brought before the house. Mention has been made of the fact that rural mail couriers should be paid a flat rate per mile. This was looked into by the department some years ago, and under the present act we ask for tenders for a contract. If we are to have the tendering system, we cannot fix a rate before asking for tenders. I do not think a true comparison can be made or relationship developed between the other employees of the department, who are classified civil servants, and the rural mail courier who tenders on a contract and enters into an agreement with the department to carry the mail on a particular route at a rate which he himself sets.

Under the present act, as hon. members know, any contractor may, after he has been executing his contract for two years, apply for adjustment of his rate if he feels he is not getting proper remuneration. This is done quite regularly by most rural mail contractors. Then the department can calculate the average that is paid in that particular area. If a man is receiving a rate that is below the average an adjustment is made in his contract.

The hon. member for Kootenay West mentioned the question of appeals by employees

[Mr. Lapointe.]

of the department as the result of promotions. These appeals are looked after by the civil service commission. They are part of the whole civil service set-up and the department, as such, does not handle them. It is quite true that in many of these promotional examinations the postmaster in that particular district may be sitting on the examining board, but these appeals are completely outside of the hands of the department. They are done that way so that at no time can the senior employee who sat on the board have any decision on the appeal. I believe, therefore, there cannot be an injustice done.

Mr. Herridge: Will the minister tell me if they are allowed to appeal to any other authority other than the board that decides on the promotion?

Mr. Lapointe: They can appeal to the civil service commission directly, under the act.

The hon. member for Oxford mentioned the establishment of letter carrier service in certain localities. I think it is well understood, Mr. Chairman, that the department must have a standard which it tries to follow in connection with the establishment of new letter carrier services. Generally speaking the basis is that the locality where the post office is situated should be one where the post office has a revenue of \$50,000 a year and there should be 2,500 points of call for letter carrier delivery in that locality. That is a standard but naturally, like any other formula used in a service such as the post office, it has to be flexible. So far as the revenue factor is concerned, it may vary according to circumstances. But generally speaking we find it is very difficult, unless we are sure of 2,500 points of call, to establish such a service. Each one is the subject of a special investigation, and it may be established even if all those conditions are not met. I will certainly be glad to look into the cases which the hon. member mentioned.

There were many other points brought up. The hon. member for Notre Dame de Grace mentioned various things. He suggested that possibly we were lax in getting information on other postal services outside of this country and establishing comparisons of various activities in the department with those in other countries. Well, we do keep in constant touch with the postal services of other countries and particularly with the United States and with Britain, and we do make comparisons. However, these are not always useful because bases of statistics may vary.

For instance, the hon. member mentioned the incidence of crime and the number of break-ins in postal establishments in Canada as compared with those in the United States.