

THE NEW RURAL MAIL BOX FOR INDIVIDUAL USE



IN England, where the fringe of one city's suburbs touches the fringe of the suburbs of its neighbour, and where most of the villages straggle along at least fifty per cent. of the main highways, rural delivery of mail matter is not a pressing problem. In America where distances are great, where villages are ten miles apart and cities a hundred miles from each other, the problem is important. The United States made an experiment and has gone deeper and deeper into postal extension. It began in 1897 with only

for most of it, because politicians are continually encouraging human greed. Politicians know people have passions and they encourage their development. No doubt the \$300 was too small, but no one will doubt that \$900 is too high. But "the government is rich, why shouldn't it pay?" And with elections in sight, it does pay. This is one of the prices which democracy charges for its greater benefits.

Canada has started in on rural mail delivery. The Conservative politicians have been agitating for it and taunting the Government for not being enterprising and considerate of the dweller in rural districts. The Government were steadily though quietly investigating the subject. They were preparing schemes and plans and estimates and possibilities. Apparently it suited their ideas to keep the Conservative Opposition agitating and talking until it would be thoroughly pledged to this extension of public service. Then when the plans are all ready, the Postmaster-General announces that Canada will inaugurate a new system of rural mail delivery. The plans are brought down, all perfected. The officials commence to talk and it is seen that they know all about costs and routes and rate of establishments and a score of other details. And the Postmaster-General gets the credit.

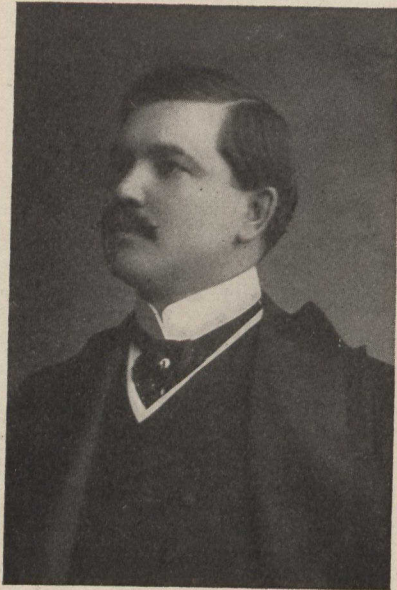
The Hon. Mr. Lemieux has received much credit for reforms during his short period in office. The British-Canadian magazine post, the new international regulations which prevent "dumping" by United States publications which are not newspapers, the lower postal rates for Canadian publishers, and a considerable extension of the house-delivery system—all stand in his name. Many of these reforms are due to his predecessor in office and to the able assistants in his department—Dr. Coulter, the deputy, Mr. Ross, chief inspector, and others. That Mr. Lemieux should have encouraged these officials is to his own credit exclusively. He has apparently bade them go on with the work about which they have been dreaming and planning. The head of a great department such as the post-office can but indicate what his general desires may be—the rest must be left to the permanent officials. No doubt Mr. Lemieux has said: "I am in favour of rural delivery, if it can be arranged economically. Show me an economical plan and I shall approve it." His officials did so and the order went forth. Canada is to have rural delivery.

The plan is a shrewd one. Every farmer who gets the service must assist. He is made a partner. He must purchase the box and erect it. It is his property, it bears his name, and he must keep it in repair. This seems excellent. The rural dweller will not allow boys to throw stones at it, nor fill it with chips. He will keep its hinges oiled and its machinery in good working order.

Again, not every farmer will have this opportunity, therefore those who get it will prize it highly. In the first place, it would cost too much to establish a rural delivery for all the agricultural population. The Department could not afford it. Therefore, at first, rural delivery is to be established on only such routes as are now traversed by a mail carrier. This will enable fifty per cent. of the rural population to get the service. At first glance, it would seem that less than fifty per cent. would be served, but by placing boxes at cross-roads to serve contiguous districts the percentage is considerably increased.

The accompanying illustrations show what the

boxes are like and how simple mechanical devices are used to signify the presence or absence of mail. The courier is not required to leave his horse or vehicle. He carries a hook in his hand and draws the box toward him. He can do this, remove and insert mail, in about one-half minute. This is important because it will minimise the extra service for which the government must pay. One hundred boxes on a twenty-five mile route can be examined in less than an hour. An additional hour on a twenty-five mile trip should not greatly increase the yearly cost of the courier service. If higher class couriers are required on account of the more responsible work demanded of them, this will be a more serious item of expense.



Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux,
Postmaster-General.

83 routes, while to-day it has 40,000 lines on which couriers deliver postal matter to the agricultural or rural population. The following table shows the growth of this service, which now costs over thirty million dollars per annum:

1897	83 routes
1898	148 "
1899	391 "
1900	1,276 "
1901	4,301 "
1902	8,466 "
1903	15,119 "
1904	24,566 "
1905	32,055 "
1906	35,666 "
1907	about 40,000 "

Not only has the United States increased the number of its routes but it has experienced a rising charge for each route. In 1896, a route, about 25 miles in length, covered once a day, cost the government \$300 annually. In 1898 this was increased to \$400, in 1900 to \$500, in 1903 to \$600, in 1905 to \$720 and in 1907 to \$900. Each route costs three times as much now as at the beginning. This is characteristic of all government service—the fixed charge is continuously rising. Politics is responsible

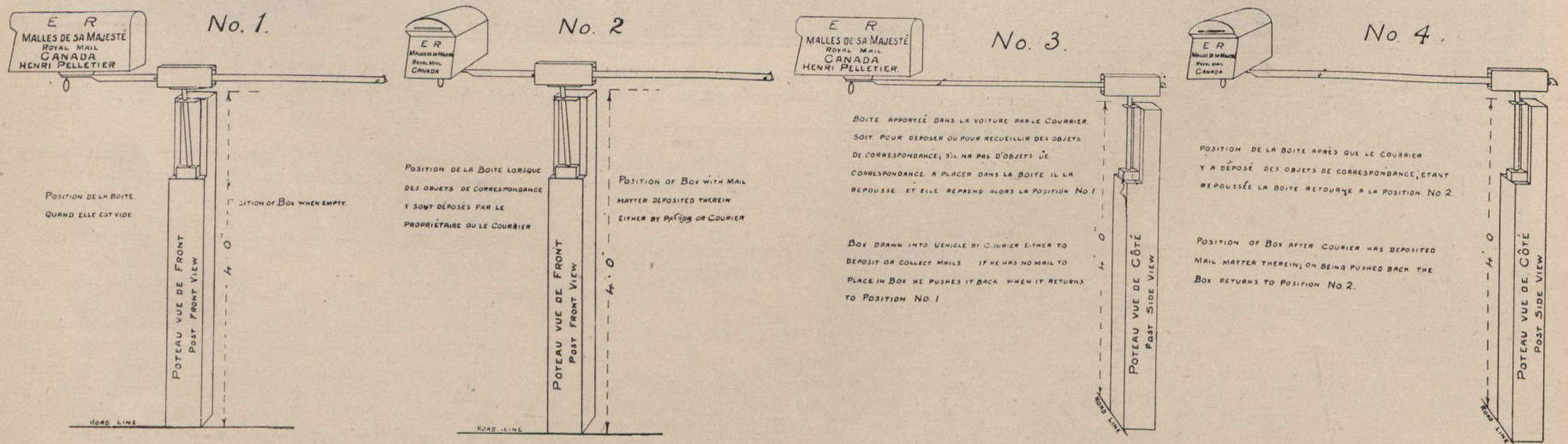


Mr. George Ross,
Chief Post Office Superintendent.

Just how the rural postmasters will be affected remains to be seen. They must send their mail out instead of having it called for. They must route it as it is routed under a delivery system. This may increase their work in most distributing offices and thus increase the cost to the Government. Other offices which are not distributing centres may be closed or have their pay lessened. Just how this will work out is a question for the future.

The great feature is that the farmer will be able to get a daily paper delivered at his gate with some degree of celerity and regularity. It will be a boon for the daily paper publishers and a greater boon for the rural resident. The man with beef, hogs, wool, dairy products or grain to sell, will be in daily contact with his nearest city market. This will be economically advantageous. Moreover, it will add to the attractiveness of life in the country and tend to make residence there more inviting. Its effect on this feature of our national life should be extremely beneficial.

It is a great reform. The honours may be divided between the members of Parliament who advocated it and the Postmaster-General who has had the courage to add a new and costly feature to the public service under his control.



The box, draw rod and gear are of metal, the post of wood. When the box faces as shown, it indicates to both proprietor and courier that the box is empty.

When the box is turned as above by either proprietor or courier, it indicates to them that there is mail in the box.

When the courier passes, he draws the box into his vehicle with a hook and collects or deposits the mail. The name of the proprietor is shown on the face of the box.

Position of box after courier has deposited mail matter therein. On being pushed back the box returns to position No. 2.