

*Civil Service Superannuation*

That is a matter on which I wish to express no opinion, but I can assure the hon. gentleman that if the fiat is applied for it will be granted.

Mr. NEILL: May I go back to what the minister was speaking about before? His remarks were, I am sure, very informative and a revelation to many of us who are not familiar with the new measure. So far as I personally am concerned, if the minister would guarantee that he is going to be on that treasury board, I would have every confidence in his handling of the matter. In explanation of my remark that the treasury board was somewhat of a one-man position I recall that a number of years ago I went to see the then Minister of Finance, not the present one, and made some proposals about some of these matters, and he told me bluntly that he would not grant my request. Then I said: "What about the treasury board? May I submit it to them?" He said, "well, I am the head of the treasury board, and there is your answer." This made me think that the treasury board was more or less of a one-man proposition, but if the minister tells me that the situation is different I can possibly live on hope.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: There are men sometimes with such strong personalities that they do get their way even with several colleagues.

Mr. NEILL: I will take a chance on the strong personality of the minister if he guarantees that he will look into anything that I bring to his attention.

I want to bring to his attention a weakness of all people who make laws. They introduce a very nice bill, but there is always in it somewhere a joker, and the joker in this bill I find is on the page to which the minister referred where power is given to make regulations. I do not care who makes the act if you will let me draw the regulations. Then it will be my act—especially when the regulations are drawn by civil servants. Further evidence of that is in paragraph (c) which says that the positions will be defined by the governor in council; that means by an official. I have seen instances where the bill said one thing and the regulations said the very opposite, and it was the regulations, made by an official, that counted when we tried to get some justice.

The minister has said that the head of the civil service association has expressed his approval. Yes, but he is a big man and he thinks only in terms of Ottawa or of the big centres and of the civil servants who come more particularly under him. He is a long

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

way from British Columbia. It is not my constituents who are out there that he is thinking of.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I think the hon. member will permit me to say that those who are his constituents are also the constituents of the president of the federation, which comprises civil service groups throughout Canada from one ocean to the other.

Mr. NEILL: That may be so, but I would like to bring before the minister the position of the deckhands on the government ships. I have not the act under my hand, but I have a very strong conviction that these men by some provision are kept out of the civil service. I am speaking subject to correction, but I am fairly certain that the men employed on government ships as deck hands are not eligible to come under the act.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I think the hon. member's memory is substantially correct, but he has not put it in quite the same form in which it appears in the act. The officers on these ships were affirmatively included. There was no exclusion in terms of other ranks than officers, but that was the result.

Mr. NEILL: The result was that these deck hands were not eligible?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: They were not included, but now they will be eligible if they are by the regulations declared to be eligible because of their having served for a long period.

Mr. NEILL: Then you have to trust to the tender mercies of the regulation maker and he cannot do anything wrong. May I impress on the minister that it is only fair and just that these deckhands should come under the act. They work for long hours in all weathers and some of them have long periods of service, five, ten and fifteen years, and they are entitled to superannuation benefits. If the minister gives me the assurance that they will be eligible for superannuation under this bill I will be quite satisfied.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: The only assurance I can give is that before they were not eligible; now they will be eligible, and if the regulations do not include them the administration will be subject to the criticism of this house, because if it is a class which the administration should include they will have the power to include them.

Mr. NEILL: And the minister will keep a finger in the pie?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: The minister will convey my hon. friend's recommendations to the electors of Quebec East.