

Supply—Public Works

Mr. KING (Kootenay): We have them up into the Peace river country, north of Edmonton, also running east and west of Edmonton.

Mr. HODGINS: Are these local or trunk lines?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): Some are local lines, and some trunk. The line under discussion a moment ago would probably be considered a trunk line, or at least a connecting link with a trunk line. I was asked a few moments ago as to the costs of telephone operation. I have here a statement showing the cost of operation and maintenance and the revenue of the government telegraph service from 1920-1921 to March 31, 1925:

	Operation and Maintenance	Revenue
1920-1921..	\$1,005,494 90	\$330,470 43
1921-1922..	947,341 11	290,131 34
1922-1923..	908,840 51	289,252 66
1923-1924..	867,887 30	284,328 30
1924-1925..	834,140 80	293,924 27

That shows a decreased cost of maintenance and operation, with the revenue slightly higher this last year than during the two preceding years.

Mr. STEVENS: Does that include the Yukon?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): I think that includes the whole operation.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I think my hon. friend will agree that his first figures are entirely illusory for the simple reason that the dollar was of much greater value then than it is now. We have been getting rid of mileage, which largely accounts for the decrease in operation costs. We are now starting to increase the mileage here. Does my hon. friend think that is a good thing?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): We are improving the service, not increasing the mileage.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I am speaking of this item generally. We are having new mileage here.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): Some new mileage.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: What is the idea? The policy of the department was to reduce the mileage. Now they are starting in with new construction.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): We will reduce the mileage where it is not necessary, but where settlement requires it, we will construct in all probability, as we have been doing in the department for years. During the last year we did cut out a very considerable mileage, especially in northern Saskatchewan, but

[Mr. Kellner.]

there will be some reductions and some additions from time to time.

Accounts Branch—salaries of agents and clerks, travelling and contingent expenses of outside service, \$21,000.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: What is that item?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): This is required for salaries of agents, paymasters and clerks of the Accounts branch, outside service, exclusive of travelling and contingent expenses. We have at the Westminster agency an accountant a clerk-bookkeeper and a senior clerk-bookkeeper. At the Edmonton agency we have three officials, at St. John, and in Manitoba we have an arrangement with the bank.

Mr. THURSTON: Is this in connection with all forms of Public Works expenditure?

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I wonder if my hon. friend has ever been able to find out just exactly what it costs to run the department, having regard to salaries and the cost of civil servants. We have often discussed this before, and I have pointed out time and again to my hon. friend and other ministers that I think it is advisable to get all our salary costs together so that we can know what they are. At the present time we have our salary costs for the inside and outside service, our costs under civil government, and further salary and clerical costs under various odd items. Could my hon. friend tell me what the whole cost of his department is in salaries of agents, employees and the like?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): I am sorry to say I have not the memorandum which I had prepared a year or two ago. At that time we did make a compilation of the total cost of the service, showing the percentages and if my memory serves me right, the showing was not bad. Unfortunately that statement is not here, and it would be impossible for me to give an estimate of the cost. I will have it looked up and brought up to date and will be pleased to submit it to the committee later.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I just want the committee to realize how unfair it is to expect the minister to carry on business intelligently under such a system. He himself cannot tell whether he is economizing or anything else. He does not even know what his staff are costing him, and he says it will take him some time to calculate. A great effort was made two or three years ago to ascertain, and now he does not know. We ought to have something before us so that any member of the House would know at