

Supply—Treasury Board

Mr. Harkness: Mr. Chairman, I should like to say just a word or two with regard to the committee system with which we have been experimenting during the last year or two. I think it has advantages in many ways, but I believe many of the advantages are lost because of bad scheduling. This is the point I particularly wish to make, namely that the committees should be set up early and the scheduling of the meetings of the committees should be such as not to interfere with the sittings of the house or with the sittings of other committees. During the 22 years I have been a member of the House of Commons I have been trying to put this point over in the various committees of which I have been a member, and in this chamber. However, I am sorry to say that there has never been very much in the way of material advance made in that regard.

If you have two or three committees authorized to sit at a certain time, they will almost invariably hold their meetings on Tuesday mornings and Thursday mornings, and if they are meeting more than twice a week they will probably all meet at the same time. I believe that many of the difficulties which the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre has mentioned could be obviated by a reasonable scheduling by a house co-ordinating group.

The Chairman: Shall vote No. 1g carry?

Item agreed to.

Government administration—

19g. To authorize the Governor in Council to amend from time to time schedule A of the Public Service Superannuation Act by deleting therefrom any board, commission or corporation named therein that has ceased to exist, and to deem, with effect from the 11th day of July, 1966, that persons in positions, as determined by the Governor in Council, in the whole or any portion of any board, commission or corporation which has its own pension plan are not employed in the public service for the purposes of subsection (1) of section 4 of the Public Service Superannuation Act while such pension plan is in force, \$1.

• (9:50 p.m.)

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Mr. Chairman, lest the President of the Treasury Board think that there is concurrence in the remarks which he made earlier about \$1 votes, I merely wish to say that I think this item and the next one are not matters which are proper for the estimates and should be put in a statute. I believe this is particularly true of these two \$1 votes, because earlier the house had before it the superannuation acts. I suggest that this

is where these matters should have been dealt with. I will not reiterate the views that I have expressed before. I only wish to say that I am unrepentant so far as they are concerned.

Item agreed to.

24g. To authorize as of March 31, 1967, the charging to the superannuation account and the retirement fund, as defined in the Public Service Superannuation Act, of the amount of all advances made pursuant to finance vote L100D of Appropriation Act No. 2, 1966, and L100E of Appropriation Act No. 4, 1966 to or in respect of persons described in those votes who were required to make contributions under the Public Service Superannuation Act and the Canada pension plan or the Quebec pension plan in respect of remuneration received after December 31, 1965, and to provide that, notwithstanding the Public Service Superannuation Act, the contributions payable pursuant to that act to the superannuation account or the retirement fund by any such person shall be reduced to the extent that the combined effect of that act and the Canada pension plan or the Quebec pension plan result in a requirement to contribute in respect of that remuneration at rates in excess of 6.5 per cent in the case of a male contributor and 5 per cent in the case of a female contributor prior to his or her ceasing to be employed in the public service, \$1.

Item agreed to.

25g. To authorize the treasury board to delete from the accounts certain debts due, and claims by, Her Majesty, each of which is in excess of \$1,000, amounting in the aggregate to \$15,133,978.33, \$1.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): Mr. Chairman, vote 25g is a very large sum of money. I think that perhaps it is the largest item which has ever been written off. One sees that in relation to the National Revenue taxation the average amount of write-off is \$10,456, which would indicate that there are some very spectacular claims. Similarly, in Defence Production the average write-off is \$13,289, and in Unemployment Insurance there are two claims averaging \$25,300. The minister has been kind enough to give me, in accordance with past practice, a list of the items which are being written off, which I have not had an opportunity to examine.

However, I would like him to assure the house that he has given them his careful consideration and that he believes that all these items, totalling over \$15 million, are in fact uncollectible.

Mr. Benson: Not only do I believe this but, as my hon. friend knows, before a write-off takes place an inter-departmental committee examines it and decides whether the amount is absolutely uncollectible. I would point out that the largest amount is in the Department