

Supply—Public Works

Mr. Robichaud: There is a general increase for that branch in this item 328 of a little over \$1 million. There is an increase from \$7,402,301 to \$8,536,892. Is this increase mainly owing to salaries or to an increase in staff?

Mr. Green: Most of the increase is due to salary increases; then, of course, there is some additional staff.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I am rising very briefly to re-echo what was said by the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo. I could not agree more completely with him about the excellence of the staff of the department both here in Ottawa and in the province of Newfoundland. I am sure the minister's officials will tell him, if he does not know already, there is only one thing wrong with the staff in Newfoundland and that is there are not enough of them. That was very understandable in the period when the architects and engineers and other technical personnel were so fully employed in this country that it was just not possible to hire them and probably not desirable to interfere with capital development throughout the country by going on with any public works that could reasonably be postponed. We have now reached the situation where the minister himself indicated that it was greatly in the public interest to accelerate those works in every way possible. I know from what I have seen, even in the past week, that the addition of some engineers in the province of Newfoundland would enable the department to get on more rapidly with this work, work which as the minister knows is very badly needed in that province. I have wondered what efforts were being made by the department in that direction because we all know at this time, with the universities closing, it is not hard to get competent personnel to carry on this kind of work.

Mr. Green: We will be very glad to check into this situation in Newfoundland. The officials of the department have been carrying a tremendous load during the winter months and now with the increased construction during the present season. It is not always easy to convince the treasury officials as to just how much of an increase there should be in staff. The hon. member knows that this was always somewhat of a problem.

Mr. Pickersgill: Quite.

Mr. Green: We are very anxious to keep the staff at its proper size.

Mr. Pickersgill: Anything that I can do to strengthen the minister's hand I will do. I can think of one argument he might use on the Minister of Finance. It is that the salary

of half a dozen engineers in each of the provinces might save thousands and thousands and maybe millions of dollars in unemployment insurance and unemployment assistance in this country, because the bottleneck in so many of these projects is supervisory, technical and engineering staff. I know, because, when I made supplications year after year to the Department of Public Works when I was on the other side of the house, I had it explained to me by the former minister. He convinced me because I know he was right, that they just could not get on with these projects because they could not take engineers from other work which was more in the national interest; but that is not true today.

Mr. Caron: Did I understand the minister to say a while ago that the increase of over \$1 million was due mostly to increases in salaries?

Mr. Green: The increases were, salaries and wages, \$792,591; travelling and removal expenses, \$150,000; freight, express and cartage, \$2,000; telephones and telegrams, \$36,000; office stationery, supplies, et cetera, \$43,000; materials and supplies, \$71,000; acquisition of equipment, \$10,000; repairs and upkeep of the equipment, \$30,000.

Mr. Caron: Has there been a general increase in the whole department or is it just increases in some branches of the Department of Public Works?

Mr. Green: Most of the increase in salaries is for new positions. There are some other increases involved in it but the bulk of the sum is for new positions.

Mr. Caron: Have any increases been given to the lower bracket salaried people in the department during the last year?

Mr. Green: A general increase was approved by the present government after coming into power last summer.

Mr. Pickersgill: On the recommendation of the preceding government.

Mr. Caron: Does that apply to the lower bracket salary people?

Mr. Green: That applied to everybody.

Mr. Caron: The civil servants or the hourly rated people?

Mr. Green: The general increase applied, of course, to the permanent civil servants. Those employees on an hourly basis have their pay adjusted from time to time accordingly. They were not covered by it. The amounts are set by the Department of Labour.

Mr. Caron: I did not quite understand the last sentence.