

Public Works. Anything that is not quite regular and that is attributed to the late Minister of Public Works will, I think, bear some looking into. Here is a position that has been vacant for over two years, as the member for Three Rivers has pointed out, the work of the Department of Public Works has been curtailed since the war; and there is certainly no immediate prospect of the work of that department being suddenly enlarged. In the face of these facts, it is proposed not only to continue a position which has not been filled for over two years, but to provide for an increase of \$700 in the salary attached to that position. I do not think the hon. gentleman can justify that before this committee. I entirely concur with the suggestion of the member for Three Rivers that this amount should be struck out.

Mr. REID: I have obtained information from the deputy minister that will, perhaps, explain this matter a little more fully. Mr. Wright was filling this position at the time the former Minister of Public Works took charge of the department. As I have said, he was a good man, and the minister appreciated his services. Mr. Wright severed his connection with the Public Works Department of his own free will to take a position with a firm in Montreal. Subsequently he came back to the department and asked for a position, and the late minister so valued his services that he gave him an appointment as superintendent of Postal Station A in Toronto. When he left the department Mr. Wright was receiving \$3,900; if he had remained in the position he would now be receiving \$4,000, the maximum of his class. The late minister was anxious to get Mr. Wright back to Ottawa again, and the only way he could do it was by paying him the salary to which he was entitled and which he would be getting if he had not left the position. The \$700 was put in in order that Mr. Wright might be brought back to Ottawa where his services are required. There is nothing to hide in the matter. Mr. Wright was an appointee of the late Government, but he attended to his work and his services were valued. If we struck out this item Mr. Wright could not be brought back to Ottawa to take up the duties of this position.

Mr. MURPHY: Do I understand the hon. gentleman to say that it is his intention to bring Mr. Wright back and to reappoint him at this salary?

Mr. REID: I said that that was the intention of the late Minister of Public Works. That is what the vote is there for.

Mr. MURPHY: I am asking if it is the hon. gentleman's intention to do that.

Mr. REID: As far as I am concerned, I am not filling any positions in the Public Works Department unless they simply have to be filled. Mr. Wright will have to remain where he is until a new Minister of Public Works is appointed, who will deal with this matter as he sees fit.

Mr. MURPHY: If that is the case, you do not need this vote?

Mr. REID: If Mr. Wright should be brought back it is only fair that this item should be passed, so that the new Minister of Public Works, whoever he may be, can deal with the matter.

Mr. MURPHY: He may never have heard of Mr. Wright, or may have no intention of appointing him. If, as the minister alleges, this item is in the Estimates because it was the intention of the late Minister of Public Works to re-appoint Mr. Wright, I want to know if the minister is going to re-appoint him. What salary is he receiving?

Mr. REID: Three thousand six hundred dollars.

Mr. BUREAU: If the minister says that this amount is intended for Mr. Wright, and that Mr. Wright will get it—we are all satisfied that he is a good man, and that \$4,000 would hardly be paying him enough—I have no objection, but I want an assurance from the minister that this money will be paid to a good man like Mr. Wright.

Mr. REID: I have given all the assurance I can.

Mr. BUREAU: No assurances at all.

Mr. MURPHY: The hon. gentleman must recognize that he has given the committee no assurances at all, but rather thrown out a suggestion as to what may be done—which he has made plain he has no intention of doing. If the minister wants to be fair, if it is really his intention to give this salary to Mr. Wright, let him say so, and the item can go through. If not, the item will be passed under false pretences.

Mr. REID: I do not think I can say anything more. The late Minister of Public Works put the item in, so that he could bring back Mr. Wright from Toronto to this position in Ottawa. Mr. Wright is a very valuable official, but if the hon. member thinks that Mr. Wright may be deprived of this money, if he will move that the item be struck out, I will not object.