

Supply—Legislation

friends—has office of some kind. But I do not think we want to see this kind of practice followed in the national field.

It seems to me that it is no laughing matter, though it may be that the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam was, perhaps, just having a little good clean fun. But we now seem to have found out from the minister that perhaps there is some intention to appoint a lot more assistants than there were before and I think we are at least entitled to be told whether it is the intention of the government to do this or not.

Mr. Green: The short answer to the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate is that the number would be limited by the amount of the vote, which is \$56,000. If it should be decided that this total is not required there would be that much money saved, but there is a ceiling, namely the amount of the vote.

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, but unfortunately with people only appointed for one month it would not be much of a ceiling—it would be a case of the sky being just about the limit. I suppose that even the Minister of Public Works would not know what to do with more than, say, five parliamentary assistants, but if there is to be no limit put on this he may find himself in that embarrassing position some day in January or February or March before this vote expires. The minister talks about the necessity of not reducing this item. He was not in the committee when I directed a question earlier to the Speaker and, I think, not very properly to him, about why the estimate showed only \$28,000 for last year. It seems to me there is something wrong there. Either there is something wrong with the estimates or there is some explanation.

Mr. Speaker: I have obtained an answer. There was no vote last year. As the house will recollect, the estimates were not passed. The actual expenditure was \$28,000 and that was authorized by governor general's warrant. That is why it appears as an estimate of last year.

Mr. Pickersgill: As hon. members will recall Mr. Chairman, I said I felt there was some kind of explanation. I did not think it was negligence on any one's part not to have the explanation at hand. But that very fact does show that no hardship would be done to any one by reducing this vote by the number of months that have already passed for which it cannot possibly be used. I would think in view of the contemplated deficit of the Minister of Finance that hon. gentleman would be very happy to join with us in reducing this estimate by the number of months and days that have already passed

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

in this fiscal year so that to this extent at least his estimates would be smaller than they otherwise were.

Mr. Gour: Mr. Chairman, I should like to bring to the attention of the house leader a very important consideration. When the Prime Minister decides to name the parliamentary assistants I urge that he not forget eastern Ontario. We used to have two cabinet ministers from eastern Ontario. One of the best qualified ministers represented the French-speaking population in that part of Ontario. Also, there was a most competent and capable minister who was English-speaking. At the moment eastern Ontario is not represented in the cabinet. My good friend the Minister of Agriculture requires a parliamentary assistant and I would like to suggest that the appointment be made from among hon. members from eastern Ontario. I have two neighbours, one English-speaking and one French-speaking. The hon. member for Carleton is a fine fellow. If he were appointed as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture it would be better than nothing. At least eastern Ontario would be represented in the cabinet and the problems of agriculturists in that area could be made well known to the government. It would cost no more or less to appoint this hon. gentleman to that position than it would to appoint any one else. I would hope that eastern Ontario would be represented in the cabinet by at least one parliamentary assistant and there should be representation through both an English-speaking and French-speaking parliamentary assistant. In any event at least one parliamentary assistant should be named from middle and eastern Ontario. That is all I have to say on that question. I think it has been a grave mistake on the part of the Prime Minister to delay these appointments for such a long time. There are at least 200 hon. gentlemen on the other side of the house who cannot sleep at night because they are in suspense as to whether they will be appointed parliamentary assistants. Surely in that overwhelming majority on the other side of the house the Prime Minister can find 14 hon. gentlemen who could fill positions as parliamentary assistants.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Chairman, I join again with my colleagues who have just spoken because the Minister of Public Works who leads the house was not here when the main arguments were put forward by those on this side of the house who respectfully urged the government to take some positive line and give the house some indication which has not yet been forthcoming. The government is asking that we