

Supply—Transport

Sir Edward Fellowes says that questions, although "ostensibly for obtaining information and asking for action, were really a way of 'getting at' the government". Dealing with supplementary questions Sir Edward said:

It was by this means that the private members could criticize the government on matters of administrative action and on points of policy which seemed to them unsatisfactory.

I felt it was only fair that this side of the picture should also be on the record today. I am sure we all agree with you that the whole point might be given further study.

Mr. Speaker: With regard to that conception of the use of questions as a means of getting at the government, I think in fairness hon. members should also read "A Question in Parliament", which also appeared in "Papers on Parliament", published by the Hansard Society in 1949. This was prepared by a gentleman who had been 20 years in the parliament of the United Kingdom, sitting on both sides of the house, Sir Herbert Williams, M.Sc., M.Eng., A.M.I.C.E. He said:

Quite obviously it would be grossly unfair to expect a minister to answer any one of many thousands of questions affecting his department unless he has notice of it.

And then later:

In order, therefore, that a minister should be in a position to answer questions he must have notice, and the procedure of the House of Commons provided, in the ordinary way, that he was to have a clear twenty-four hours' notice.

In 1946, on a motion by the Right Hon. Herbert Morrison, the time of notice was increased from one day to two days. If notice is given it would be in accordance with the system in the United Kingdom, but I repeat, and these are my last words, if I were to enforce the rules rigidly as they are and thus gain for myself the reputation of being tough I am sometimes given, if I were to be rigid in my interpretation of the rules, I would cut off supplementary questions, I would cut off all questions on policy, I would cut off all questions containing argumentative material. When questions start with "Is the minister aware?" or "Will the minister take action to the end or in order that, etc?" those are all argumentative questions containing debatable matters and should be disallowed.

SUPPLY

The house in committee of supply, Mr. Robinson (Simcoe East) in the chair.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

A—Department—

435. Departmental administration, \$1,777,100.

The Chairman: Hon. members will find this item on page 69 of the book of estimates, with the details commencing on page 532.

[Mr. Knowles.]

Hon. George C. Marler (Minister of Transport): Mr. Chairman, following a practice of my predecessor I intend first to comment briefly on the proposed expenditures by my department according to the standard objects of those expenditures and then to mention some projects of current interest.

The total estimated expenditures for my department, air transport board, board of transport commissioners, Canadian maritime commission and national harbours board are \$142,667,112, an increase of \$2,524,391 as compared with 1955-56. The total for my department—excluding the boards and commissions—to which I have just referred, is \$120,564,250, which represents a decrease of \$776,348. However, this decrease is more than offset by an increase of \$4 million in the provision for the railway grade crossing fund.

Under object 1, which covers civil salaries and wages, we have a total expenditure of \$38,451,981, which is an increase of \$2,100,083, or 6 per cent. This represents 550 additional positions, of which 498 are for the air services branch. Of the number I have just mentioned, 498, 80 are required to staff the marine radio stations formerly manned by the Canadian Marconi Company, and 206 are accounted for by major expansions in our air traffic control operations. A general expansion in the meteorological division to keep abreast of current demands will account for another 75 positions. The remainder are required to meet the normal growth of aviation, telecommunications and marine supply and to discharge our new responsibilities in the north.

The increase in object 2, Civilian Allowances, of \$117,456, or seven per cent, is attributable to an increase in salaries, and relates directly to northern, isolation and other special types of allowances.

Object 4, Professional and Special Services, is increased by \$206,700 or 17 per cent. Of this amount \$90,000 is for stevedoring costs in connection with our northern supply work and \$25,000 has been included to enable us to develop the possibility of operating one of the important northern airfields on a contract basis. I do not propose to comment on Travelling and Removal Expenses as I dealt with these last year, and the amount required this year is not materially changed.

Freight, Express and Cartage, object 6, is increased by \$88,905, or 13 per cent, in connection with our northern supply work. The sum of \$33,000 is attributable to additional costs for transportation of fuel oil and other materials to our station at Cambridge Bay and to the new radio range at Lac Eon, and \$11,000 to additional supply costs at Fort Chimo, due to increasing activity in that area.