

Supply—Resources and Development

Mr. McLure: The amount of item 384 is \$819,675. For salaries for permanent positions the amount is \$190,050. There is a list given of those and the amounts that they receive. The amount for temporary assistance is \$207,210, over 25 per cent of the total, and we do not know anything about it. We know this much now that we never knew before, that one hundred people are receiving that money, but we do not know whether they are engineers, brakemen, or what they are. Then we have a new bunch growing up called "casuals". I looked that up in the dictionary and it means happy-go-luckies. The amount for these happy-go-luckies or casuals involves another 25 per cent of the total amount of the item, and we are asked to vote it without any details whatsoever. There is \$190,466 for casuals. Next year I think you should certainly direct the officers who prepare these estimates to give the committee some information, even if they only tell us that there are 500 casuals or happy-go-luckies. We know that at election time these are the most useful things you can have; and, as I have explained on many occasions, this item is largely used for that purpose. I believe we should have a breakdown of it. If we cannot get it for this year, let us have it for another year.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): It seems to me, as the hon. member for Queens has said, that we are being given very little information about this. We know the fire hazard in our forests is terribly serious. I am not doubting for a moment what the hon. member for Kootenay West said about the excellent work being done by these forest engineers, but it seems to me that for the good of his own department the minister should be able to make some general observations about this problem. I think we should know to what extent it is being dealt with; to what extent, for instance, there is co-operation between the dominion and the Ontario department, and what the great obstacles are. If they are cigarettes, then that is worth knowing. Here is something which is taking a terrible toll of our natural resources, and we get just a few bits and pieces of information without any general, organized attempt to let us understand the problem. It might be that we would insist on the minister having several million dollars more to publicize this situation if we knew what the problem really was.

Mr. Winters: Well, Mr. Chairman, I can say we could use several million dollars more to good advantage. The operations of the federal government in the field so far have been in attempting to forecast forest fires by evaluating fire hazards. Last year, as hon. members know, we enacted the Canada

Forestry Act, by which parliament authorized the government to exercise wide powers in the field of forestry. Most of those powers, however, are in fields of prior responsibilities of the provinces.

I felt that something should be done, and one of my first acts when I assumed this responsibility was to write to all provincial governments asking them how in their opinion we could most appropriately co-operate under the terms of this act to develop and conserve our forest resources. I have heard from several of the provinces; I have spoken to the representatives of a number of others. So far the talks have been exploratory. There is one thing on which I think we all agree; that is that the long-term forest policy of this country can be nothing short of the type of forest management that will result in sustained yield, and any steps we take now must be considered as stepping stones toward that end result. But we have a great many steps and processes to go through before we arrive at sustained yield. In the first place we must know what the forest inventories are, and we have not a clear picture of our forest inventories on a national basis. We not only have to know those inventories as of a certain date; we have to be able to evaluate those inventories at some time hence, in order to tell whether we are achieving sustained yield.

There is no doubt that forest fire protection is one of the greatest factors in the over-all consideration and one of the most important steps toward the goal of sustained yield. We know that; all the provinces have raised that point with us. But before we commit ourselves to an over-all forest program, before we make our final commitment in the field of forest fire protection or suppression, or the control of insect pests, or whatever commitment it might be, I think we have to formulate with the provinces an over-all concept of what the policy should be and how we can best use the financial and other resources available to us to arrive at that goal of forest management on a sustained basis.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Well, Mr. Chairman, I think the minister has made an admirable statement of the problem, but I got the impression that really we are just sort of scratching the surface now and that we may be doing so for a long time to come. If that is a fair impression it seems to me rather disturbing and definitely raises in my mind the question of whether we are doing enough and whether the minister should not steal some money from some of the other departments that in our opinion perhaps do not need as much as they are getting. It seems to me the minister has stated the problem but has left me, at any rate, with a very