

*Supply—Finance*

have a main switchboard, and then we have four or five satellite switchboards which serve more than one department.

**Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood):** Well, I shall not pursue the matter further. I have no doubt it will be considered, and that we may get some progress next year.

Item agreed to.

General items of payroll costs including superannuation payments—

103. To provide for a government contribution to the superannuation fund in an amount equal to the estimated current payments of individual contributors in the previous fiscal year, \$7,100,000.

**Mr. Herridge:** On June 23 last I brought the attention of the minister to a certain case in connection with a former employee of the Post Office Department who could not pay up his superannuation. In concluding his remarks the minister said he would be glad to study the situation to which I referred, and to see whether anything could be done. Is the parliamentary assistant in a position to answer my question?

**Mr. Sinclair:** I am sorry I did not answer that question when I answered the others. The case in question has been studied. It refers to a man who worked eight years as an employee in a revenue post office. At that time the postmaster was not a civil servant. He ran his post office on a commission basis for the government, and employed whatever staff he needed. Then that post office was made a civil service post office, so that the postmaster and the employees all came under the Civil Service Act and the Civil Service Superannuation Act. He then worked twelve years as a civil servant, employed directly by the government.

This man is in difficult circumstances, and he is now asking whether or not his eight years of service under the commission postmaster should not now be included so far as superannuation is concerned. Hon. members must realize that that would open a very wide field, because it would include within the provisions of the Civil Service Act and the Civil Service Superannuation Act people who had not been direct employees of the government. It could be extended perhaps to include employees of contractors doing work for the government. For those reasons the decision has been that his eight years of service before he became a civil servant cannot be included for pension purposes.

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Chairman, the last time the estimates of this department were being considered I had just entered the chamber and

[Mr. Sinclair.]

did not have certain files with me. I should like to ask the minister if he remembers receiving a letter from the superannuated federal civil servants in Vancouver, British Columbia, on March 3, 1948, to which he replied as follows—and I shall now quote the reply the parliamentary assistant made.

**Mr. Sinclair:** In 1948, of course, I was not parliamentary assistant.

**Mr. Fulton:** Did your view change when you got your appointment?

**Mr. Knowles:** I think the parliamentary assistant led with his chin that time.

**Mr. Smith (Calgary West):** You are still a good diplomat.

**Mr. Knowles:** This is what the hon. member for Vancouver North, as he was then, wrote to these people:

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of March 3, drawing my attention to the difficult plight of superannuated civil servants.

I agree with you that the rise in cost of living has made pensions quite inadequate to meet living costs, and I will be very glad to do all I can in representations to the government and in the house to have this situation adjusted.

Yours sincerely,

James Sinclair

Will the parliamentary assistant give us a report of what he has done in connection with making representations to the government and in the house concerning this matter?

**Mr. Sinclair:** I shall be glad to do so. As I said at that time, I was a private member, and I was not as conversant perhaps with the superannuation act as I am now. But I did at that time see the minister, and the minister, as will be recalled, made a statement in which he said that while it was admitted that these people on fixed civil service retirement pensions were having difficult times in those days, it also applied to those who were on pensions from companies, and those who had planned for their old age through buying government annuities, and also all the other citizens who were not under a government civil service or pension act.

He pointed out, as the hon. member will recall, that the government of Canada had subscribed part of the cost of those pensions. I must say that his argument was that, if it was a matter of helping them, then all not civil servants who were in that position should be helped. That is the intent of the report of the committee which has just been sitting to consider old age security—to see that all people who are in this plight will secure assistance, not just those fortunate enough to have been civil servants.