

to the case mentioned by my hon. friend from Gaspé; what I have said in a general way applies to the official in question. I can assure the committee that the retirement of tried and competent officials is an unpleasant and unwelcome occurrence for the minister. There are officials who are changed to other locations, and others who are retired. Many are excellent men, and it is no reflection whatever on them if they are removed to some other place or are retired.

Mr. LEMIEUX: This official was not retired; he was reduced in rank.

Mr. McCURDY: I can give the position to which he has been recommended by the chief engineer.

Mr. LEMIEUX: If you please.

Mr. McCURDY: The assignments are not final until they receive the approval of the Civil Service Commission. The engineer to whom my hon. friend has alluded and who, I understand, is an excellent official, has been recommended by the chief engineer to be employed as senior assistant engineer in the combined district. If he suffers in salary at all, it will only, perhaps, be to the extent of \$100 or so. His is one of several cases where a man who previously had charge of a district has been placed second in charge of a larger district.

Mr. LEGER: If the transfer of the engineering office from Chatham, N.B., to St. John was for the purpose of economy, I would heartily concur in it, but in the northern part of that province there are hundreds of miles of sea and river shore with numerous breakwaters and wharves where considerable dredging is required. From Chatham the departmental engineer could, in his automobile, cover one-half of the district and return in one day. But to go from St. John to various parts of Restigouche and Westmoreland, and other parts of the province, occupies a much longer time. I do not see any economy in it, because there is a greater expenditure of time and then there is the expense incurred in travelling. That loss of time is much greater than would be the case if the office were retained in Chatham and, of course, the expense is much heavier. To show the committee how the transfer was brought about, perhaps I may be permitted to quote from a letter written by the Minister of Customs and Excise (Hon. R. W. Wigmore) to the St. John Commercial Club. The quotation is as follows:

You will remember that in amalgamating the engineering services of the Public Works Department it was the intention to have the headquarters at Chatham and not at St. John, but I was successful in having the headquarters located at St. John, which, of course, resulted in a very strong protest from Chatham, so that St. John is undoubtedly getting some additional benefit from the amalgamation of the public works engineering services.

In view of this statement by the Minister of Customs, it would appear that a desire to have work done and expenditures made in the city of St. John was the reason for the removal of the office from Chatham, and that it was not a step taken in the interests of economy. I certainly protest against it because, in my opinion, Chatham was a more central place in view of the conditions in the northern part of the province.

Mr. McCURDY: I need not assure my hon. friend from Kent (Mr. Léger) that one could not undertake a reorganization of the district engineering offices of the Department of Public Works, or any number of local offices, without the communities affected by that reorganization seeking to have those offices retained where they formerly were. The number of district engineering offices has been reduced, under the reorganization from thirty-one to sixteen, and it will be no surprise to the committee to learn that from thirteen of the fifteen places where the offices are being closed, protests have come from local bodies and even from members of Parliament. That is not surprising because we all understand what the feeling would be in the local district in each case; but if heed were to be paid only to local sentiment, and we were to disregard the wider interests involved, it would be impossible to make progress at all. In the selection of the headquarters for the enlarged districts, and in the location of the most convenient and central point for the location of the district engineering office, the opinion of the chief engineer was the opinion that ruled. In New Brunswick it happens that in his opinion, and I see no reason to overrule that opinion—in fact I see no reason to overrule his opinion in any of the cases—St. John was, all things considered, a more convenient place, and by the amalgamation a saving was effected. I am sure that many members of the House have been anxious to-day to hear news from New Brunswick. Well, I have some good news from that province for the committee. It is, that under the reorganization there will be a saving of upwards of \$8,000 in the