

Supply—Legislation

motion in order to tidy up these estimates so that they will be more in keeping with reality.

(Translation):

Mr. Dupuis: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the \$56,000 estimate to provide for the salary of certain parliamentary assistants, I must say that I regret that the government has not yet seen fit to make the necessary appointments. Does this mean that the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) has been unable to discover any qualified members to fill those vacancies? I can hardly believe that. Could this be a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of our friends opposite in order to make sure of their presence in the house at all times? To my mind that is another possibility.

Mr. Chairman, the fact remains that we are being asked to vote \$56,000 for the appointment of parliamentary assistants. Even though the Prime Minister has stated more than once that those appointments would be made in the near future, the session is running out and we still do not know who those gentlemen might be. I could, of course, suggest some names to the Prime Minister, but I am convinced he knows of them better than I do. Then, too, I wonder though if he is not somewhat uneasy about appointing any from the ranks of Quebec members, since the famous natural gas scandal. I feel that the Prime Minister is being most cautious indeed, lest he appoint parliamentary assistants who, one fine day, could be "gassed", directly or indirectly.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I think the government should explain the matter. The theory I have put forward represents a distinct possibility. Natural gas has had damaging effects far beyond those generally assumed. The Prime Minister should explain why, at this very late stage of the session, he still refuses to appoint parliamentary assistants.

(Text):

Mr. Green: Mr. Chairman, this amendment goes to show what sitting for many days in the heat of an Ottawa summer will do to some of the hon. members of the house.

An hon. Member: Including you.

Mr. Green: Here we have the C.C.F. moving this amendment, supported by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate and the hon. member for Essex East; and may I add that from neither of those two hon. members do we expect very much—

[Mr. Argue.]

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Green:—particularly on such occasions. However, here is an attempt by two opposition groups absolutely devoid of any real issue on which to attack the government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Argue: Who is whining now?

Mr. Green: Hon. members can groan and grunt all they like but that is the fact.

An hon. Member: Just a cheap political stunt.

Mr. Green: Here we have them drawing another red herring across the trail.

Mr. Pickersgill: Surely a parliamentary assistant is not a red herring.

Mr. Green: This is another good example of their standard of statesmanship. The vote under attack at the moment is to provide for the pay of parliamentary assistants. You will notice, Mr. Chairman, that it is not calculated on the basis of a certain number of parliamentary assistants. This is one reason why these specious arguments advanced from across the way fall so flat. It may be that the number of parliamentary assistants appointed under this vote would be more than 14. Whatever is done hon. members of the house, including members of the government party, may rest assured that the move made by the Prime Minister will be one which he considers to be in the best interests of the country. There is never any doubt about his decision being made on that basis. This attempt to come in here today and to shed crocodile tears for all the private members on the government side of the house because they have not all been appointed parliamentary assistants—

Mr. Argue: The minister is extremely touchy.

Mr. Green:—is very touching and all very amusing on a Saturday afternoon in Ottawa. But may I point out to the hon. members of these two opposition parties that we are not fooled by this amendment or by this attempt made to stir up trouble in the hearts of some of the members on the government side. It was hoped that some of these members would have their egos affected. Oh, the hon. member for Assiniboia has made his speech; he made the most he could out of nothing for five or ten minutes. Let him just keep quiet until I have finished.

We are always very grateful for suggestions as to ways in which the efficiency of government in this country can be improved, but this is not one of those suggestions—it is just a leg-pulling amendment which has been moved by hon. members of the C.C.F.