

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Those seven were not given back seniority which had been acquired by others who had remained, and they could not be given back such seniority without its being taken from others who had earned it in accordance with the terms of their engagement.

Mr. HARKNESS: We have now a third explanation. I am really getting more confused all the time. I think everyone would have been happy with the original explanation given by the minister, but now we have a third explanation and I still do not know what the position is with regard to these men. I do not know how many there were. I know there were some.

Mr. COCKERAM: Are these men given pension rights for the years they served in the army, the navy or the air force?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: They cannot be given pension rights under the law as it stands.

Mr. JACKMAN: May I ask the minister whether, when the term of enlistment of certain men in the R.C.M.P. expired during the war years, which was five years, if they had reenlisted with the R.C.M.P., they would have been free to join one of His Majesty's services.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: No.

Mr. JACKMAN: Then all I can say is this. Some of these men of the highest spirit in the R.C.M.P. saw fit to serve their country in a field which was at least equal to that in which they had been, and to many of us, it seemed, a higher field since they risked their lives in the service. Had they enlisted in the R.C.M.P., they would not have been allowed to perform this higher service; but, having rendered that service they have infringed the desire, the discipline and the iron spirit of the R.C.M.P. administration and are prejudiced now when it comes to their present term of service. I think the matter is one in regard to which those of us who represent the people of the country should have a word to say; and if it differs from the views of those who happen to have the command of the R.C.M.P., I think we should at least put on record exactly how we feel. In my opinion these men who showed the higher spirit are discriminated against.

Mr. HARKNESS: Would the minister give an explanation to end all explanations as to why these people are not given seniority?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I have given all the explanation I can. If the hon. gentleman has not understood it, I am sorry. But I am unable to put it in any other form.

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Mr. HARKNESS: Which of the three explanations am I to accept?

Mr. JACKMAN: No wonder you have not got recruits.

Mr. MACKENZIE: Tory filibuster.

Mr. JACKMAN: Tory fairness.

Mr. ZAPLITNY: In the case of a war veteran who subsequently joins the R.C.M.P. but has not been in the service before, does he receive any credit in the way of seniority or pension accruing from service in the armed forces?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: Not under the law as it is. Those who joined, having had service in the first great war, get credit for that service because that was provided for by amendment made after that war. There has not yet been any amendment with respect to service in this last war.

Mr. ZAPLITNY: Is it the intention to bring in such an amendment?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I have already stated a couple of times that I expect to have a bill to amend the Pension Act, and I said I thought it would be the desire of the house to do on this occasion what was done after the last war in that regard.

Mr. HAZEN: There were some members of the mounted police who were let out prior to the war for, presume, minor offences. When the war broke out they were taken on the strength again and I presume they are still on the strength. Perhaps the minister cannot say whether they will be kept on the strength, but if they are, when it comes to their getting pensions, will the time they spent prior to the war count towards pension?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: The intention is to keep them on the strength as long as their services may prove to be satisfactory, and the whole of the time they will have served will count for pension purposes.

Item agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

391. Departmental administration, \$494,958.

Mr. MERRITT: I wish to say a few words on this vote with regard to the port of Vancouver. On December 14 last, at page 3538 of *Hansard*, the hon. member for Vancouver South raised four points of importance to the port. They were, first of all, the refunding of the bonded indebtedness at a lower rate of interest; second, the question of the capitalization and the valuation of the assets of the