

Supply—Interior

Mr. BLACK (Yukon): Would the minister give us the real reason why this shuffle of offices was made, why Mr. Mackenzie was brought out of the Yukon and why Mr. Reid was taken out of the Immigration department and put into the Yukon?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I have been trying for the last hour to give my hon. friend a reason. I have given him all the reasons I have.

Mr. BLACK (Yukon): Was there any complaint against Mr. Mackenzie's administration as gold commissioner or any complaint against Mr. Reid's administration of his office in the Immigration department?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I get complaints of nearly every officer, but I would not say they were of a serious character. I could not say I did not receive some complaints, but I did not receive any of a character that I considered serious.

Mr. BLACK (Yukon): Was Mr. Reid not a useful officer in the Immigration department? Was he not needed where he was being employed? Was he a spare man?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): No. Mr. Reid was recently moved to the British Columbia coast as an officer in the Immigration department there. He has had a long Yukon experience, and I asked the Immigration department for the transfer of Mr. Reid temporarily for this purpose, believing that he knew the territory. I may also say that I had discussions privately with my hon. friend. I have asked Mr. Reid to prepare a report on the Yukon, and some means of cutting down the expenses that are involved in its administration. I have been cutting down that expenditure to some extent, as my hon. friend knows, but I think it could stand a much further cut. I chose Mr. Reid, and he has been loaned to us for that purpose. As I said before, he is not permanently transferred, but he has had a very long experience, as my hon. friend knows, in the Yukon country.

Mr. BLACK (Yukon): Not a particularly long experience, and his experience was in the very early days when conditions were very much different from what they are now. He has not had the experience of modern conditions at any rate that Mr. Mackenzie has had. I would say that Mr. Mackenzie was quite well qualified to make such a report, and if he is not qualified for that, he certainly would not be qualified to report on Arctic conditions.

I quite agree with what the minister has said, that great economy has been brought about in the cost of administration of the [Mr. C. A. Stewart.]

Yukon, in all departments of that territory, particularly in the Department of Justice. I think the Department of the Interior is down as fine as it can be under present conditions. But in connection with the position of gold commissioner, the action of the government has been anything but economical, and as the offices we are discussing now are apparently interchangeable I might be allowed to refer to them both together.

I asked some questions earlier in the session as to the present salary of the gold commissioner, and how many people were being paid and acting as gold commissioner. The minister replied:

The duties of commissioner of the Yukon have been added to the gold commissioner, who is paid an annual salary of \$5,000, with annual living allowance of \$3,000. Before consolidation former commissioner had salary of \$6,000, living allowance \$6,000, and free house. Gold commissioner had salary of \$5,000, living allowance \$1,500.

A person reading that question and answer would infer that some saving had been made in the present rearrangement of offices, when quite the contrary is the fact. The combining of the duties of the commissioner with those of the gold commissioner was done years ago, away back in 1916, before this government came into office, and by that action of the government of that day a large amount of money was saved. But for some unaccountable reason this government, as late as 1923, notwithstanding that they had declared in favour of a policy of reduction and were apparently attempting to save money in the Yukon, without any reason at all increased the gold commissioner's pay by \$1,500 a year. He was then being paid \$6,500 a year, and for some unaccountable reason this government increased that to \$8,000. What was even much more astonishing, they dated that increase back to April, 1919, and paid him the lump sum of \$5,750, without any cause whatever, at a time when they were supposed to be carrying on a programme of economy. So that, far from there being anything economical in this rearrangement, as the minister would have it appear from his answer to my question, it was a gross extravagance, and the government cannot say that this was done without warning, because I happened to be in the Yukon last fall when the information came in that the gold commissioner was to be removed and another sent in his place. I took the precaution on the 4th of October last of sending this telegram:

Dawson, Y.T., 4th October, 1924.

Premier W. L. Mackenzie King,
Ottawa, Ont.

Referring to Gold Commissioner MacKenzie's order from Minister Interior to go Ottawa now, whether Mackenzie's absence from Yukon be temporary or