

of improving the service, for an over-zeal in that direction is never to be despised, but there are sometimes officials who have a grudge against a confrère, and it so happens that, having the ear of the minister and of the higher officers in the department, they sometimes succeed in doing an injustice, but an injustice will not last. Has my hon. friend received any complaints against Mr. Bertrand? Is it not a fact that he has been all these years a deserving and honest official who has given the department most efficient service? If he was a good official, could the minister not give him the standing which he had previously? I am informed that by seniority Mr. Bertrand should have been the chief resident engineer of the new district of Rimouski, which comprises Rimouski proper, Bonaventure, Gaspé, and perhaps Chicoutimi, although I am not sure. It would be very unfortunate if, at his age, after so many years of faithful and devoted service to the Crown, this official should be handicapped at the present time. I hope the minister will give me a satisfactory answer on the points I have raised.

Mr. McCURDY: As probably all hon. members are aware, certainly all who have been in close touch with government operations for the past ten years, the expenditures by the Department of Public Works on new undertakings have been substantially curtailed during the past six or seven years, and the amount of money available for improvements of a public character is much smaller than formerly. The largest expenditures by the department were made, I think, in the year 1913, but since that time the votes for these purposes have fallen by some \$10,000,000. Now, it is quite evident that a staff of engineers which was capable of coping with expenditures of the larger sums is more than sufficient to take care of the expenditures under the reduced votes. For a year or two previous to the time I assumed direction of the department, a plan of reorganization had been in contemplation in order to reduce the staff to a number more in keeping with the demands upon it. Under a report prepared by the chief engineer under date January 29, of this year, a reorganization was effected of the Engineering Branch of the department, and while it is not necessary for me to refer in detail to the reductions and consequent changes, I might say that the net result is that the establishment

[Mr. Lemieux.]

of the Engineering Branch has been reduced from 230 to 138.

Mr. LEMIEUX: The Outside Service?

Mr. McCURDY: That is the outside Service, although one of the outside districts so-called is located in the city of Ottawa, with a consequent saving in the total expenditures for salaries in that branch. Unquestionably, every one would approve of some form of reorganization under the circumstances that have prevailed of late years and I myself have always felt it was the duty of the minister to effect these savings if possible. But in order to accomplish that result the status of some officers must necessarily be affected. You cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs, and I have no doubt that one of the reasons why this reorganization was postponed was that, previous to last year, no provision existed for such officers as might be retired. At the last session of Parliament, however, a Retirement Act was piloted through the House by the Minister of Immigration and Colonization (Mr. Calder) and that Act made provision, perhaps not generous, but still a provision, for officers who might be retired when their services were no longer required. The officers in the engineering service who are to be retired, will be entitled to the benefits provided in that Act. I am not personally acquainted, as hon. members will understand, with the members of the engineering staff at large, so I directed the chief engineer of the department to call into council his district engineers from the various engineering districts in the country, and, after consultation with them to prepare a slate of officials who, in their opinion, were best qualified to administer the services of the department. This reorganization was to take effect on May 1, and, of course, the proposed establishment and personnel was referred to the Civil Service Commission for its approval. If there has been any case of hardship in the selection of the officers who are to be retained, an appeal will lie to the Civil Service Commission. I am quite satisfied that the chief engineer of the department has exercised his best discretion as to which of the members of the staff should remain to direct the future operations of the different engineering districts. However, as I have said, if there is any case of hardship, an appeal lies to the Civil Service Commission, and I am sure that if an error has been made by the chief engineer in any respect, it will be corrected. I cannot refer very particularly