

Supply—Public Works

to stand by them and it does not help very much to try to precipitate a debate on a matter of this kind.

Mr. Chevrier: I was not trying to precipitate a debate but apparently the hon. minister has been touched by what I have said and has gone, I think, a little further than he should have gone. I have no intention of discussing cases. I was looking for an over-all statement such as the minister made, voluntarily, after the election of June 10 when he assured the Canadian people that there would be no severing of employment because of political activities in so far as the government was concerned. The position which he is now taking is different from that which he took on the first occasion, and he has withdrawn—

Mr. Green: On a question of privilege, Mr. Chairman, I made no such statement that there would not be any action taken where there had been political activity. The hon. minister cannot find that I made any such statement.

Mr. Chevrier: I must accept the hon. minister's statement but he certainly did in this House of Commons assure not only the whole house but the country that this question would be carefully considered by his government as would the question of change-over and we were assured that—

Mr. Green: I made no such statement in the House of Commons and the hon. minister cannot find that I did.

Mr. Chevrier: I am very glad the minister thinks I am still a minister.

Mr. Green: There has never been a government which has taken over in Canada where there was so little disruption of the civil service.

Mr. Chevrier: I would like—

The Chairman: Order. I would like to bring to the attention of members that we are at present debating the estimates of the Department of Public Works and I believe we are now getting away from that debate. May I therefore suggest the return to the matter under consideration?

Mr. Chevrier: Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, I could help the Chair by bringing the discussion back to the item under consideration and by restating that when I rose, I discussed the question in a general way in the hope that I would get a simple answer. Instead I got a rather acrimonious reply, but notwithstanding what the minister has said I would like to say that while I was on the other side of the house there was no occasion which I can recall when, in my

capacity as Minister of Transport I had occasion to recommend that a person be severed from his employment because of political activities and I do hope that will be the case under the present government.

Mr. Green: There was a very good reason because they were all on your side, so why should they be severed?

Mr. Chevrier: There were five elections.

An hon. Member: How would he know?

An hon. Member: What about Cornwall?

Mr. Chevrier: What was that about Cornwall?

Mr. Robichaud: I would like to ask the minister what is the policy of the department with respect to the appointment of inspectors on construction projects when among the applicants is a man who has overseas service with the Canadian forces to his credit?

Mr. Green: I will deal with that when we come to the particular item.

Mr. Pickersgill: I do not think the minister's answer is quite good enough. This question applies to the whole range of activities of the department. We are discussing the administration of the department and it does seem to me the question asked by the hon. member for Gloucester is very relevant. He beat me by a fraction of a second in asking it. There are a great number of appointments—I do not believe any department has more appointments than the minister's department—of a casual and occasional nature. I think we are entitled to know, on item 1, whether or not it is the policy of the department to respect the veterans' preference in connection with these appointments.

Mr. Green: The answer to that is yes.

Mr. Pickersgill: There are two questions that I wanted to put to the minister. I have been looking through the estimates and I cannot find anywhere—that is why I am asking the question on item 1—a vote for the survey of the Chignecto canal which the Prime Minister promised to investigate during the election campaign. I wonder if the minister could tell me where to find that item in his estimates.

The second question is as follows: I have been looking at the amounts appropriated for the minister's department by the governor in council, in the absence of any parliament in this country. I find that the amount appropriated was about \$3 million less than was in the estimates presented to parliament which were never passed. I was wondering if that \$3 million was also taken into account when the minister was making the claim he

[Mr. Green.]