

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. What is the increase in the number of the force this year over last? And can the minister also give us the number of desertions from the force, the number of promotions from the ranks to the position of officers, and what punishments have been inflicted?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. In 1896 we found a force consisting of 1,000 men. We reduced it to 500, and afterwards increased it to 600, which is the present number. Since 1896 we have made thirteen appointments and eleven promotions. As to the number of desertions, I can only speak of last year, when there were twenty. All the appointments have been made from the ranks of the active militia.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Has the First Minister any record of the punishments?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. In the Northwest Territories 23 men were dismissed from the service and in the Yukon 10 men. The offenses were not of a very grave character—the most common one was drunkenness.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. There were other offenses for which men were confined in barracks, put in prison, and so on?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I have not that information at hand.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I think it advisable that the information should be brought down during the session. Not that I think the officers are too hard on the men, but this is information which should be before the public. The position of a mounted policeman is changing. Formerly he was more or less a judicial officer; now he is more a policeman.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. He is as much a judicial officer as ever.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. But he has not the same scope for the exercise of those functions. There was a time when the mounted policeman was practically king of the country in which he was situated. To-day municipal organizations and other authorities exist which do a considerable part of the work formerly done by the mounted policeman, and so the exercise of his powers is more or less limited. I have always thought it important that the mounted policeman and the regular soldier should not be subject to any danger of extreme punishment by their officers. To this end, whatever offences these men may have committed we should have a record of them here in parliament, so that in case of necessity the public may have all the details. There may be cases in the mounted police, as there have been in other organizations, of vindictiveness and spite on the part of those who exercise power. I would rather that a thousand offenders should go unpunished than that one man should be punished improperly.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. This is the ninth year that I have had charge of the estimates of the Northwest Mounted Police, and I must say that information such as that asked for by my hon. friend (Mr. Sam. Hughes) was never asked before. I think the condition of the force is as good to-day as it ever was, and I do not know that there has been any charge of cruelty or anything of that sort on the part of the officers. But my hon. friend (Mr. Sam. Hughes) is entitled to the information that he asks for, and I shall see to it that it is brought down.

Northwest Mounted Police—Yukon Territory—pay of force, \$185,000.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. The force in the Yukon is composed of three hundred officers and men. There are 16 officers—an assistant commissioner, 2 superintendents, 9 inspectors and 4 surgeons.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. So, all told, there are 900 mounted policemen?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Yes—600 in the Northwest Territories and 300 in the Yukon. The rate of pay to the mounted police in the Yukon is the same as in the Northwest Territories, except that a special allowance is given to those in the Yukon. The assistant commissioner and commandant of the force receives an allowance of \$2 per day; superintendents, inspectors and surgeons, \$1.25 per day; sergeants, 75c. per day; corporals, 50c. per day, and constables 50c. per day.

Mr. THOMPSON. Even at the increased rate of pay that the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) has suggested, and the Bill provides for, the officers and men in the Yukon are not paid as much as they should be when you consider the pay received by the ordinary labouring citizen in that country. In the mounted police of the Yukon we have a very high class of men, and the force has been a credit to the government and to the country. When the force was first established, I believe, the idea was not to have a swagger regiment, but a mobile force that would police the frontier. If that was the idea, then the force in the Yukon have lived up to that idea absolutely. The variety and value of the work done by these men is not generally known or appreciated. Besides ordinary police duty, they furnish escorts to bring gold from claims to the banks in Dawson—unfortunately there is not so much of this as there formerly was. They assist the crown timber and land agents in collecting fees. They act as officers of the Customs Department to collect duties on imported goods, some of the men being employed in the Customs Department altogether. They help the telegraph department in repairing the lines. The sergeant-at-arms in the Yukon Council is a member of the mounted police. In some cases of minor offences on the creeks the policemen try