

B.C. Telephone and Telegraph System

is what is in effect happening here—of a permanent employee, pension benefits would commence immediately. Yet as I have said, by what under these circumstances amounts to a cruel stroke, by virtue of the regulations which came into effect on January 1, and because he does not cease to be employed by the government service until April 1 that three months interval has the effect of depriving him of his pension rights under the government superannuation scheme until he reaches the age of 50.

I have placed that individual case before the minister and the house because it serves as a clear illustration of the unfairness that can result to the employees of the government system unless some satisfactory arrangement is worked out with the Canadian National Telegraphs to cover the employees on the telegraph side.

I do not wish to take longer on this matter. There is much more material that I could read into the record, including further material from the amalgamated civil servants branch in Vancouver, but I think I have said enough to outline the situation. I should therefore like to conclude with this suggestion. If there could be an opportunity for a full report as to the extent to which the interests of the public and of the employees are being safeguarded in the sale agreement, before April 1, that situation will take care of itself; we can discuss the matter in the light of the facts of which we then have knowledge and we shall have a few days—it may only be a few days, it is true, but it will still be valuable time—in which to try to force an adjustment if we should find that the situation is not satisfactory from the points of view that I have mentioned.

If, however, the minister finds that the negotiations on these points are not going to be completed until after April 1, I would urge most strongly that the justice of the situation demands that the turn-over date be postponed until after April 1, in fact, until after the agreement is concluded, so that the agreement can be laid before the house and can be discussed in the house before the physical assets are transferred.

For the reason I gave at the beginning, if the system is to be handed over before the house knows what are the terms of the agreement, then any dissatisfaction which we might express would be useless, and any discussion which would take place as to the terms of the agreement would be a hollow discussion indeed because we would be dealing with an accomplished fact. We could register our protests, we could say what we wished had been done, but the fact would be that what has been done will have been done and we

[Mr. Fulton.]

would be powerless to change it. I have tried to lay before the minister, as briefly as I can, the things which I think should be incorporated in the agreement. I hope he will be able to give us some assurance, either that these matters are in fact being satisfactorily written into the agreement or, if he is not able to report to us at the present time on the situation of these negotiations, that he will postpone the date of the transfer.

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I might be allowed to interject here the remarks that I would have made at the normal time but should like to make now because, just as soon as I have made my observations, it is necessary for me to leave the house.

I want to thank the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) for raising the question in the fair manner in which he has raised it. As he has said, I know that there are other members of the house who are keenly interested in the subject of this sale, as there are on this side of the house. Over and above those who I know will take part in this debate, I want to make special mention of the correspondence which I have had, more particularly with the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Applewhaite) and other members from British Columbia on this side of the house about the transfer of these assets.

The hon. member for Kamloops has, in effect, dealt with two main questions, first the price of the facilities that are being sold and, second, the conditions of employment after the transfer. I should like to follow him in sequence on those two points. It is a fact that the assets of the government telephone and telegraph services are being sold for \$750,000 to the Canadian National Telegraphs and, in the same amount, to the British Columbia Telephone Company. Those assets were valued at various prices following a survey in 1952 made jointly by the British Columbia Telephone Company, the Department of Transport and the Canadian National Telegraphs.

According to the Department of Transport survey the total valuation was \$4,436,000; according to the Canadian National Telegraphs survey it was \$3,776,000 and according to that of the British Columbia Telephone Company it was \$2,357,000. No appraisal was made of these facilities on the basis of depreciated value of capital originally invested. This would have been a complicated study since many parts of the system are very old and moneys have been spent from time to time on renovation and replacement as well as on new services. However, it is quite reasonable to assume that had the