

*Supply—Mounted Police*

the time that those who did not get leave would forfeit their seniority if they left, and the others who remained were told that those who left would be forfeiting their seniority and that it would go to those who remained. It is that promise that I feel I cannot interfere with and that it would be improper to break to those who did stay and whose services to the country at least coincided with the satisfactory situation which was maintained here.

Mr. COCKERAM: The minister has explained that situation, but could he tell the committee whether or not that circular to which he referred was issued prior to the government regulation with regard to reestablishment in civil employment?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I am told that it was. I do not know personally; I was not here then.

Mr. COCKERAM: Then it seems to me, if that circular was issued prior to that, that the government in regard to reinstating their own employees should obey the law which was subsequently made.

Mr. HARKNESS: A few minutes ago, when I was asking the minister a few questions about this matter, he told me that there were only seven cases of men who had not been given the seniority they had in the force before enlistment in the armed services; that these were more or less, as I understood it, disciplinary matters, and that the commissioner or the officers did not think too well of these particular chaps. With that I was quite satisfied, because undoubtedly disciplinary cases do arise. But if it is a matter, as the minister has just explained to the hon. member for York South, that the authorities put out a pamphlet or something along that line and that now they are saying, "Because we put out that pamphlet we will not restore anyone we do not feel like restoring", I am far from satisfied. As the matter stood before, I was satisfied with the explanation, but I am certainly not satisfied to be told that the government put out a pamphlet at the start of the war and that now they will cut off men who served in the forces because of that piece of red tape.

Mr. JACKMAN: May I ask the minister whether the general law on the statute books in regard to reinstatement in civil employment does not override the departmental regulations?

Mr. ST. LAURENT: In my opinion it does not.

Mr. HARKNESS: Could we find out from the minister whether this particular—

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

Some hon. MEMBERS: Sit down.

Mr. HARKNESS: I can wait for a long time if you want to yell. May I ask whether these men are now being cut off from reinstatement in pension rights and so on because they contravened some desire on the part of the force, expressed in a pamphlet, and which should not exist in the force, or whether, as I understood from the minister a short time ago, it is on account of the fact that there is a small number of men who were not desired back in the force because it was not thought that their services would be useful in the particular rank which they held when they enlisted.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: I thought I made it quite clear. As far as the commissioner can remember, there were two who were refused because he did not want them back on the force. As to all the others, they were taken back in the ranks they occupied at the time their contract expired, but they were not members of the R.C.M.P. when they enlisted. They had served the period for which they had contracted with the R.C.M.P. They left, their contract being at an end, and they now come back and say, "After we left you, we joined the forces and we would like to be taken on again in the R.C.M.P." With the exception of two, according to the information given me by the commissioner, they were taken back again. They were taken back with non-commissioned officer ranks they had before their contracts with the R.C.M.P. had expired, but they were not placed over the heads of those who had continued and renewed their contracts with the force. That is the whole situation.

Mr. HARKNESS: As I understood the situation, there were seven of these men who were taken back but not given the time they were away, as far as right with respect to seniority was concerned, and so on. My question was simply this: Were these men discriminated again, because it was not considered by the commissioner and officers that they should be back on the force? The minister gave an explanation with which I was quite satisfied, and my question now is, were these men denied seniority rights which other men were given, because it was considered that they were not sufficiently valuable to the police to fill these other ranks, or was it because, as the minister said to the hon. member for York South, a pamphlet had been issued and these men had not accepted what was set out in the pamphlet, and, therefore, would now be made to pay for it.