

Supply—Legislation

in proportion to the period of time that has elapsed. Therefore I move:

That the amount of vote No. 189, \$56,000, be reduced by five-twelfths of that figure.

That would leave the vote at \$32,666.67.

Mr. Pearkes: I am sure the government could not accept this amendment. This money has been provided. If it is spent it will be spent. If it is not spent, then in the ordinary course of events the money will just lapse.

Mr. Regier: On that point, I am sure that the Minister of National Defence will remember very well how members of his party used to criticize most severely any item in the estimates of the previous regime that obviously would not be needed for the ensuing year. At that time his party put forward the idea that it was wrong in principle to vote more money to any government than it required.

All that legislation provides for is that parliamentary assistants be paid an additional \$4,000 per annum. I am sure the minister cannot really have considered the argument that he has advanced that we ought to vote more money for a purpose than is allowed for that purpose.

The Deputy Chairman: Is the house ready for the question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): No, I think before we on this side decide exactly what we should do about this question, we ought to give the government an opportunity to explain what it intends to do about parliamentary assistants. The hon. member who has just taken his seat is quite right. Those who occupy the treasury benches, when they were on this side, were insistent that there should be a proper relationship between estimates and expenditures. There is not much sense in providing an estimate unless the government intends to carry out the purpose for which the estimate is made.

Several months have gone by now and parliamentary assistants have not been appointed. The day before yesterday the Leader of the Opposition interrogated the Prime Minister as to his intention in this regard, and the reply given by the Prime Minister was certainly not informative. No one perhaps can say whether or not parliamentary assistants will be appointed, except the Prime Minister. During the course of the session the Prime Minister did indicate that parliamentary assistants would be appointed. Here we are coming to the end of the session during which a parliamentary assistant is expected to perform his major functions. Now it is not difficult for the Minister of National Defence, speaking for the government, to say

[Mr. Regier.]

that he could accept this amendment, but that is not sufficient. The hon. gentleman is too intelligent to expect us to believe it is adequate.

We should be told by the government whether or not they intend to appoint parliamentary assistants for the balance of the period or whether the institution, initiated by the previous administration, is going to be dropped. If it is dropped, of course, there will be great disappointment in the ranks of hon. gentlemen opposite because—I was going to say there are many hundreds but that would be an exaggeration—there are certainly well over a hundred on the other side and in the overflow on this side who are sitting here day after day in expectation that each is going to be preferred. Knowing something about what that expectation is like, I feel that I should speak for these unnamed individuals who aspire to sit in the seats of the mighty. The government has an opportunity to relieve them of the tension which has pursued these aspirants over a period of five months; it has an opportunity to interfere with careers or move careers along. We should be told today. I do not know of anyone who can tell us more effectively than the Minister of National Defence. He has the ear of the Prime Minister, as I am sure no other minister has—

Mr. Pearkes: That is absolute nonsense, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): If the Prime Minister, who undoubtedly hears me at this time, does not think it desirable to enter the chamber at this particular moment, surely the Minister of National Defence will find it desirable to tell us whether or not the Prime Minister is going to appoint parliamentary assistants.

If not, then obviously this money should not be voted. If the government intends to appoint parliamentary assistants, we should then respect the government's wishes in the matter. Before we make up our minds on this question either the Minister of National Defence, who now shows a measure of reluctance, the Minister of Agriculture, who seems to be eager, or the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources should reply on behalf of the government. It would not be fair to ask Mr. Speaker, who has views, but no authority.

Mr. Pearkes: It must be remembered that these estimates were prepared a long time ago, and provision has been made for the appointment of parliamentary assistants, as and when it is the desire of the Prime Minister to appoint those parliamentary assistants. The work of the parliamentary assistants does not end at the end of the session. As