

Supply—Finance

if I have to I want to make it clear that I am denying there was a fiasco. This is a necessary public work.

Mr. Green: It is certainly necessary now, but it was not before.

Mr. Harris: I have an idea the Minister of Transport acquitted himself fairly well on that score on his estimates. In budgeting for something over \$4.5 billion, if you find that over a period of 12 months you only require a contingency fund of \$1 million, it seems to me it is very good budgeting.

Mr. Green: It is not that simple because the Department of Public Works itself has a very large contingency fund upon which they can draw if they have not enough money in one vote. They have millions of dollars on which they can draw if more money is required for a particular vote. How did it happen that this particular Port aux Basques vote ended up in the Department of Finance?

Mr. Harris: That is a question that could be asked of the minister concerned, but the contingency fund of the Minister of Finance is available only to the extent it may be required when urgently needed or as I have already indicated for works that have proceeded to a point where the funds allotted have been exhausted. It may be recalled that all these items, Mr. Chairman, would show up in the final supplementary estimates which I think I put through the house about March 26 or 27. They would then have been discussed and decided upon under the appropriate department concerned because this vote is reimbursed from the votes of the various departments.

Item agreed to.

126. Cost of telephone service at Ottawa for all departments, \$1,121,000.

Mr. Monteith: I am asking a question because I am guessing that this item contains the total salaries and wages of the employees of the government telephone exchange, is that correct?

Mr. Harris: Yes, but in addition to that the staff that administers this particular item.

Mr. Monteith: Which staff? In other words, here is an item connected with the cost of telephone service at Ottawa and on top of that each department has a telephone and telegram account. Are those items that are charged to each department purely long distance calls or what is the distribution of it?

Mr. Harris: This is the Ottawa exchange, Mr. Chairman, and the telephones outside of Ottawa are paid by the departments.

[Mr. Harris.]

Mr. Monteith: The Ottawa exchange covering all government departments?

Mr. Harris: In Ottawa.

Mr. Monteith: What might be included in the item, "other telephone service expenses, \$1,151,440", what type of item?

Mr. Harris: The item of \$1,151,000 is the Bell Telephone Company's bill to us for services in Ottawa.

Item agreed to.

128. To provide for the expenses of the royal commission on Canada's economic prospects, \$225,500.

Mr. Monteith: This item covers the expenses of the royal commission on Canada's economic prospects. There was \$300,000 in 1955-56 and there is \$225,500 estimated for 1956-57. I wonder if the minister might give us a brief statement on when we might expect the report of this royal commission, how much longer it is likely to carry on, and so forth?

Mr. Harris: I believe the chairman is in Ottawa at the moment and I believe they have completed their public hearings and are considering their report. I have not anything to indicate how long that will take, but I would suppose it would be in within the next three or four months.

Item agreed to.

129. To provide for the expenses of the royal commission on television and radio broadcasting, including the payment, notwithstanding the Civil Service Act, of honoraria or allowances as may be authorized by the treasury board to officers, clerks or employees permanently employed in the civil service for services rendered by them to the commission, \$150,000.

Mr. Monteith: May I ask the same question concerning this item which is to cover the expenditures of the royal commission on television and radio broadcasting?

Mr. Harris: They have not completed all the public hearings yet, sir, and their work will be later than the Gordon commission, though I think some time in the winter or early spring.

Item agreed to.

130. To provide, subject to the approval of the treasury board, for supplementing other votes for the payment of salaries, wages and other payroll charges, \$750,000.

131. To provide for the government's contribution, as an employer, to the unemployment insurance fund in respect of government employees paid through the central pay office, \$1,080,000.

Mr. Monteith: I notice that this item is the same as for last year, \$750,000. What type of person does this cover? It has to do with the