

SUPPLY

The house in committee of supply, Mr. Robinson (Simcoe East) in the chair.

INTERIM SUPPLY

The house resumed consideration in committee of the motion of Mr. Harris:

Resolved, that a sum not exceeding \$1,651,674,050, being one-half of the total of the amounts of the items set forth in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1958, laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament; and in addition thereto a sum not exceeding \$7,298,566.67, being one-third of the total of the amounts of items 52, 57, 116, 117, 131, 132, 156, 248, 281, 322, 324, 328, 355, 399 and 460 of the said estimates; a sum not exceeding \$697,069.25, being one-quarter of the total of the amounts of items 153, 158, 252 and 397 of the said estimates; a sum not exceeding \$3,640,012.17, being one-sixth of the total of the amounts of items 16, 71, 134, 217, 218, 219, 227, 361, 364, 391, 422, 428 and 432 of the said estimates; and a sum not exceeding \$2,383,999.92, being one-twelfth of the total of the amounts of items 28, 69, 129, 221, 223, 224, 233, 234, 300, 321, 333, 424, 425, 430 and 503 of the said estimates;

in addition thereto a sum not exceeding \$9,635,679.50, being one-half of the total of the amounts of the items set forth in the supplementary estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1958 laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament; a sum not exceeding \$16,166.67, being one-third of the total of the amounts of items 626 and 654 of the said estimates; and a sum not exceeding \$208,333.34, being one-sixth of the total of the amounts of items 621 and 640 of the said estimates;

and in addition thereto a sum not exceeding \$7,000,000, being two-sevenths of the total of the amount of item 663 set forth in the further supplementary estimates (1) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1958 laid before the House of Commons at the present session of parliament; a sum not exceeding \$30,555,555.56, being four-ninths of the total of the amounts of items 664, 665, 666, 667, 669 and 670 of the said estimates; and a sum of \$1,000,000, being two-thirds of the total of the amount of item 668 of the said estimates,

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending March 31st, 1958.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Chairman, the second point I was about to raise when the house rose at one o'clock has to do with a matter concerning the telecommunication branch of the Department of Transport, and it arises out of a question which was asked of the Minister of Transport recently, I believe, by the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra, concerning the matter of the arrears in overtime of employees of the Department of Transport.

As the result of a small press report of the statement by the minister, I have received a communication from an employee of the Vancouver district of the telecommunication branch. I am sure the committee will permit me to quote briefly from this letter without revealing the name of my correspondent. The letter arose from the fact that this gentleman

Interim Supply

noticed the report that the minister had promised to look into the question of arrears in overtime. It says:

While Mr. Marler is investigating this overtime situation I wonder if you could bring to his attention that it would be a very good idea if he also investigated the shortage of staff situation in the Vancouver district of the telecommunication branch of the Department of Transport.

Where I am now stationed we are on an overtime basis with one day off in nine.

Perhaps the Minister of Labour might notice this reference to the working conditions under which employees of the government apparently are working at the present time. The letter goes on:

We are on an overtime basis with one day off in nine—and work short changes from shift to shift due to this shortage of staff.

To make matters worse not one member at this station, and the same holds for nearly all this district, has had last summer's holidays yet—and now this year's are due. In other words we are on a very tiring overtime shift and due over two months' holidays at this moment.

Perhaps Mr. Marler is not aware of this situation and having it brought to his attention might help relieve this condition.

It might be pointed out to Mr. Marler that this large shortage of staff in the telecommunications division is probably due to (1) poor wages, (2) poor working conditions or (3) a combination of both. The third is the one I think applies and in order to stop losing more radio operators and to help the ones left that stick with the job it is time Mr. Marler's department did something as soon as possible, as this condition has existed for a long time now.

I should be interested in anything you can tell me as to relief of this situation.

I realize we are not going to have an opportunity at this session to engage in a full discussion of the estimates of the Minister of Transport, so it probably will not be possible for the minister to give us a detailed statement as to exactly what changes in his department he has in contemplation in this respect. I feel that if the situation described in this letter is correct it is certainly something that should warrant the immediate attention of the minister concerned, and some steps should be taken to relieve it.

I think it should be obvious from the tone of this letter that it originates from someone who is a loyal employee of the Department of Transport and is genuinely concerned that efficient service should be given, but who feels that the working conditions should be reasonable and in line with those that are generally considered acceptable in this country at the present time.

The third point I wish to raise is something that concerns the internal economy of this house. I came here four years ago as a new member; and while I have high hopes that the constituents of Comox-Alberni will see fit to send me back here again, I feel that I can raise this question at this time because