

Mr. POULIOT: Would the minister mind if I took five minutes of the time of the committee to bring before it some facts that do not seem to be well understood by the house or the committee? It is about the superannuation of some people who have been seconded from the Department of National Defence to other departments. According to a return to an order of the house, there are three men in that position, General McNaughton, who is now president of the research council, Colonel Vanier, who is in England in the office of the High Commissioner, and Colonel Steel, of notorious fame, in the radio commission. The reason why the case of these gentlemen is brought to the attention of the house and the committee is not because they have been transferred, but because they have been seconded or loaned by the Department of National Defence to other departments. In the Militia Act there is a provision by virtue of which members of the staff of the Department of National Defence may be seconded instead of being transferred to other departments. What is the reason for that? The "why" is most important in this discussion. In fact, in one return the "why" was asked but was not given, and another return in which the "why" was asked has not yet been tabled. Each one of these gentlemen because he has been seconded from the Department of National Defence, to some other department, is entitled to superannuation which is twice as much as that to which he would have been entitled if he had been simply transferred. I want to bring very clearly before the mind of every member of the committee and of the minister, who knows the matter perhaps better than anybody else, that the fact that these three gentlemen have been seconded or loaned from the Department of National Defence instead of being transferred entitles them to double pension.

Last year in June, before the matter was ripe, the question was brought up in this house by you, Mr. Chairman, and also by the member for Témiscouata. We asked for some information from the government about it, and as usual the late government was entirely dumb; no answer came out of the mouth of the former Prime Minister or his colleagues. To me it seems shameful that General McNaughton and Colonel Steel, who are both members of the so-called head and brain trust of the late government, should be entitled to a reward which is twice as much as the pension to which they would have been entitled had they been simply transferred instead of seconded from the Department of National Defence to any other department.

I am strongly against that practice, and there is time yet for the Department of National Defence to bring these men back to that department and to superannuate them on the basis that would have applied if they had not been seconded. Is it not shameful to think that within six years General McNaughton will be entitled to twice as much pension as he would receive if he were retired now and were not brought back to the Department of National Defence? According to returns which have been tabled in the house General McNaughton has no office in the Department of National Defence, Colonel Steel has no office in the Department of National Defence, Colonel Vanier has no office in the Department of National Defence, but in spite of that, these people will take advantage of the fact that they passed through that department to receive twice as much for their superannuation in these days when salaries are cut by five per cent. I cannot conceive it, Mr. Chairman. Mind you, I have no grudge against General McNaughton, Colonel Steel or Colonel Vanier. I am discussing this question as a matter of principle, and I am doing it now because I believe that some members do not understand the situation. But it is very plain. It is explained in very easy language, the meaning of which can escape no one.

Moreover, I assume and I submit that General McNaughton is incompetent as chairman of the research council. Why? Because he taught physics in Montreal before the war he is now head of the scientific research council of Canada. Did he follow the scientific periodicals during the last twenty years? I wonder whether his job as chief of staff and whisperer to the ex-Prime Minister left him enough time, in order to keep himself posted on the subject of science, to read all the scientific publications that were published in all the countries of the world. Moreover, Colonel Steel has tried to hide himself behind others in the radio commission. He does not deserve a double superannuation, nor does General McNaughton. It is absurd to reward these two men for all the wrong they have done to this country thanks to their wrong advice to the late government. That is what I have to say about them. As regards Colonel Vanier, I have nothing more to say about him except that if he wants double superannuation, he should get it through a vote of parliament and not by the cellar door route. I respectfully ask the minister to consider the whole matter and see that McNaughton, Steel and Vanier are brought back to the Department of National Defence before they are superannuated.