

telegram which he had quoted, the pertinent parts of which I have taken down. Oh, I know it has been argued already today that we should have known he wanted an inquiry of some kind, that he was protesting because letters were received from a Mr. Rankin—I believe this was the name—though there was nothing on the letterhead to indicate that he was a counsel for Mr. Spencer. One letter was a mere request for the order in council dismissing him. This was a public document, and it was furnished. The other was a request for information as to the ground for his dismissal. The writer was referred to the Civil Service Act by the civil servant who dealt with the matter. Those are the only two documents. I do not think that we as a government should have been expected to draw the conclusion from those two documents that this man was seeking a hearing and had secured a lawyer to prepare the way for it.

However that may be, there was a message this morning—a telegram, according to the hon. member—

Mr. Lewis: It may be of assistance to the right hon. gentleman if I say I have just sent a copy over to him.

Mr. Pearson:—from a John Laxton, a reputable lawyer in Vancouver, and Mr. Victor Spencer. In this telegram Mr. Laxton quotes Mr. Spencer as saying he wants an inquiry into his case because he does not feel he has been fairly dealt with. His complaint—and this is why he feels he has not been fairly dealt with—is about the nature of his dismissal and the unfair deprivation of benefits associated with his job, such as pension and insurance benefits. Then he goes on to say he is not complaining about his treatment by the police.

As I understand it—and I am not a lawyer—he is complaining as an employee to his employer about the way in which he has been dismissed—the nature of his dismissal. He is complaining of being deprived of benefits associated with his job. I am not going into the technicalities of his right to superannuation—they have been dealt with by more than one speaker on this side of the house. Any civil servant taking a post with the government presumably knows what those rights are and he knows, also, that they can be forfeited by improper conduct. Perhaps Mr. Spencer does not know this. Perhaps he does not know he can be deprived of certain superannuation rights because of the nature of his dismissal.

Supply—Justice

I think it is my duty, now, to telephone Mr. Spencer myself. I do this, not because I throw any doubt on the authenticity of this message, but if Mr. Spencer is to be given the benefit of an inquiry into the nature of his dismissal and his superannuation rights, I think we in the government have the right to ask him the question whether he wants such an inquiry. He has not said so before. I know that in the past he has said he wanted to be left alone.

Mr. Lewis: I suggested that.

Mr. Pearson: I am grateful to the hon. member. If he feels it would add to the impressiveness of the telephone call I would be glad to have him in the office at the end of another telephone line and he could listen to what was being said. I say that because I might not get every word straight from Mr. Spencer. I would be glad to have this call monitored by anyone to make sure we do not have any kind of misunderstanding—not deliberate, but accidental misrepresentation of anything he might say. I think this is important because long distance telephone calls can at times lead to misunderstandings.

If Mr. Spencer says yes, and confirms this telegram, and says “I want an inquiry into the nature of my dismissal; I am worried about my superannuation benefits, and I want this situation cleared up”, I do not see any reason in the world why we should not grant him this request. I am quite prepared to do that if this telephone call confirms he would like an inquiry of that kind.

But let it be clear—and I stand firmly on this: We do not feel we have acted in any wrong way with respect to the inquiries we have made in relation to the security aspects of this case and his relationship to them. We do not feel we have been unfair to him in any respect in his dismissal from the civil service consequent on his own admissions. And we do not think any interest would be served—indeed, the security services might be prejudiced—by an inquiry into the security aspects of this matter. Nevertheless, in the aspects which concern Spencer as a civil servant, the denial of rights he now claims, he should be allowed the benefit of an inquiry. We would be glad to make that possible. He could come here to Ottawa and the inquiry could be held here, or if he is not fit to travel to Ottawa the inquiry could be held in Vancouver. Such an inquiry would remove any doubt that he has been unfairly treated