

time Mr. Carvell was Minister of Public Works he was wanting to retire, but the officers of the department for some reason or other would not consent to it, so there is no compulsion about his retirement. If Mr. McKean had to be retired, and was retired from the rank to which he is entitled, I would not have so much to say, but I particularly regret that he is being retired in a class that does not give him the benefit of the Act to the extent he deserves.

Of course, if the minister is going to pursue a policy of allowing every public work in Nova Scotia, and particularly in the Island of Cape Breton, to fall into decay, he will not have need of many engineers, but I do not think this is a time to take it for granted that we are never again going to look after public works in this country. There is a stringency in our finances now, and I can readily understand the minister not going on with new works, but we hope that that condition of affairs will not always last. When we get back to normal times, we shall require just as large and efficient a staff as before.

I would like to know whether the minister's policy is to allow the wharves and breakwaters and works of that kind to fall into decay, so that the fishermen will have to go back to the old conditions before the structures were built.

Mr. McCURDY: If the argument put forward by my hon. friend was carried to its logical conclusion, it must prove that Mr. Bernasconi should be retained as chief engineer for the province, because he makes an argument for Mr. McKean's retention on the ground of his long service. Now for every year that Mr. McKean has served with the Government, Mr. Bernasconi has served more than a year.

Mr. McKENZIE: But not always as Mr. Bernasconi. His name was Brown for a time.

Mr. McCURDY: Whatever his name was, my hon. friend will not deny his scientific attainments, and that he has served a longer time than Mr. McKean. Mr. Bernasconi was the dean of the engineering service of the Public Works Department in the Maritime Provinces.

Mr. McKENZIE: He never was. Mr. Millege was the head man of the Public Works Department in Nova Scotia.

Mr. McCURDY: Mr. Millege is not in the employ of the Public Works Department.

[Mr. McKenzie.]

Mr. McKENZIE: He is dead now.

Mr. McCURDY: Therefore he cannot be the dean of the engineering service in the Department of Public Works in Nova Scotia. Mr. Bernasconi succeeded Mr. Milledge in that position. Next to Mr. Bernasconi is Mr. Dodwell, the District Engineer for the amalgamated officers. My hon. friend may not know it, but Mr. Dodwell has excellent engineering attainments. His engineering qualifications are known far beyond the borders of the province of Nova Scotia.

My hon. friend has displayed a very intimate knowledge of local political conditions. He was able to tell the committee the political stripe of an officer in the service of the department at North Sydney who is being retired. He has more knowledge in that respect than I have, for I do not know the political leanings of any of these men who are being retired.

Mr. McKENZIE: But Mr. Bernasconi did.

Mr. McCURDY: I might tell my hon. friend that two other officers are being retired who were appointed since 1912, so if there is one Liberal, as my hon. friend says, who is being retired, I think the committee will be satisfied that no intention has been paid to the political leanings of these gentlemen when I assure them that two men who were appointed since 1912, previous to the passing of the Civil Service Act, have also been retired.

It is an easy matter for the members of this committee to find fault with the lack of expenditure. I suppose the day will never come in this Parliament when there will not be criticism of whatever course the Government of the day may see fit to pursue. If the opinions expressed in this chamber are to be heeded, if the advice given by the hon. member for Marquette (Mr. Crerar) is to be heeded, even the small votes that we are asking to maintain the public works that we now have would be smaller than they are. Surely, when there is no large amount of work to be done by engineering officers, it is the part of prudence and good administration to see that the expenditure in that direction should be as light as possible until more normal times come, and if in the meantime we exercise economy, will not the country be in a stronger position to proceed with necessary undertakings later on. My hon. friend knows that it is not from choice that small votes are asked for this year; it is because of conditions over which the committee has no control. Surely it is